TOWARDS THE AFRICAN THEORY OF LITERARY PRODUCTION: PERSPECTIVES ON THE SESOTHO NOVEL

By

Thapelo Joshua Selepe

Submitted in the Faculty of Arts in fulfillment of the degree of

DOCTOR OF LITERATURE AND PHILOSOPHY

in the subject

AFRICAN LANGUAGES

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

Promoter: Prof. C.F. Swanepoel

Date of submission: 30 June 1999

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

A SURVEY OF THE MATERIAL CONDITIONS THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE RISE OF THE SESOTHO NOVEL

CHAPTER 4

THE EARLY SOUTHERN SOTHO NOVEL (1900-1930): THE PERIOD OF BIRTH, NURTURING AND GROWTH

DECLARATION

I declare that TOWARDS THE AFRICAN THEORY OF LITERARY PRODUCTION: PERSPECTIVES ON THE SESOTHO NOVEL is my own work and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been acknowledged by means of complete references.

DATE: 1999-06-30

(T J SELEPE)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my sincere gratitude and deepest appreciation to the following:

I wish, firstly, to thank my promoter, Prof. C F Swanepoel, for his support, scholarly guidance and encouragement to make the best out of this project. His resourcefulness, his appreciation for independent thinking, knowledge of African literary studies in general and of Sesotho literature in particular, have been of great help to me.

I wish to thank my colleagues in the Department of African Languages at the University of South Africa and the School of Languages at Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education (Vaal Triangle Campus) for encouragement and fruitful discussion. I also wish to thank Prof. M A Moleleki, Head of the Department of African Languages at the University of the Orange Free State, for support and advice.

I wish to thank Mrs Hleziphi Napaai, subject librarian at the University of South Africa, and the library staff of the Potchefstroom University for CHE (Vaal Triangle Campus) for library information assisting me to acquire the necessary sources. I also wish to thank Mrs W J Kuyler of the ITM for typesetting the manuscript as well as Prof Wally Willies, Director of the School of Languages at PU for CHE (Vaal Triangle Campus) for offering to edit the final draft. Lastly, I wish to thank God for giving me life and strength to finish the project.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my wife, Malesimola, and our two boys, Lesimola and Teboho. Their understanding and support have been a great source of strength to me. To them, together with all the children of Africa I say; they should never doubt their God given uniqueness because the Creator says:

> "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born
> I set you apart, I appointed you as a prophet to the nations" (Jer. 1:5).

SUMMARY

Critical studies and creative works in the Sesotho novel have made some of the important contributions in Sesotho literary history in particular, and African literary history in general. However, such contribution has been dictated by a particular history and an ideology. The world-view in literary practice that emerged from that history is the one that tends to divorce literature, literary study and language from society. Consequently, this study identifies this practice as a problem that needs to be addressed.

This study argues from this perspective that literature, literary study and language should be re-established as integral parts in a manner that pedagogical practice would translate into positive social practices. To realise this ideal the study approaches the study of the Sesotho novel from the perspective of literary production. The theory of literary production insists that literature is a form of social production. This argument becomes even more pertinent to the study of the novel, which is viewed as having profound elements of realism that mirror society.

A consideration of the Sesotho novel as a form of literary production that is linked to other forms of social production immediately leads to the question of the development of the Sesotho novel. The possibilities that are identified include external influence and internal evolution in the development of the Sesotho novel. These possibilities also have a bearing on the study of the Sesotho novel in particular and the study of the African novel in general.

In order to pursue the argument to its logical conclusion, the development of the Sesotho novel is divided into three periods: 1900-1930; 1930-1960 and the 1960s-1990s. Each of these periods demonstrates a particular ideological leaning that is akin to the material conditions of each period. Taking this trend as a pattern in the development of the Sesotho novel, this study advocates an approach that links literature and literary studies to society.

Key terms: Sesotho novel, African literature, epic, folklore, literary production, mode of production, language, social development, audience, pedagogical practice.

PREFACE

Responding to a question raised at a conference held in Kampala in 1962 on 'What is African literature?' Richard Rive answered:

> I am certainly not the product of a clash of cultures, rather a synthesis of all experience, and the boundaries are more, more comprehensive than Africa and Europe. A writer creating in his own small corner, must of necessity have an approach differing from another in another small corner, depending on who he is, where he is, and what he is writing. Different stimuli must produce different responses (cf. Barnett, 1983:264).

Rive's statement is as relevant today as it was more that thirty years ago because things have hardly changed in African literature. We are moving into the 21st century still grappling with the same question, 'What is African literature?' Answers that have been provided ever since the debate on this question started have so far failed to provide enduring solutions. This failure to resolve such a basic question can be ascribed to the fact that the basic issues in African literature have not been addressed. Most outstanding among them is the question of language.

Such a question is not even raised in other languages except in the case of African languages and literatures. The categories such as African literature in European languages and African literature in indigenous African languages have made a solution to this problem even more elusive. This problem becomes more serious when it comes to critical studies. Barnett (1983:253) sets the tone for this scenario when he says the following in the introduction of his study:

> The leading scholars of African literature, such as D.D.T. Jabavu, S.M. Guma, Daniel P. Kunene, C.L.S. Nyembezi and B.W. Vilakazi had produced studies written in English of African literature, but their concern was only with writers in vernacular and is therefore not part of this study.

Barnett's exclusion of these so-called 'leading black scholars of African literature' in his study on *Black South African literature in English* is understandable. He recognises the 'outstanding' contribution of these scholars to African literature but it is not relevant to English literary study because the primary sources are in

vernaculars. This then raises another curious question: If the critical works of these leading scholars of African literature do not have a place in English literary study, where do they belong?

One would have expected that by virtue of the languages in which the critical studies of these works are written, they should qualify for consideration or at least interest the English audience. If this is the case, then what will make such studies relevant to vernacular literatures and interesting to the African audience because they are not written in vernaculars? A related question is therefore why are critical studies in vernacular literatures, including pedagogical practice, conducted via the medium of English and even Afrikaans, not vernaculars?

This scenario has another dimension namely, the implications of this arrangement for African writers and critics themselves. Writers have a free choice of language and audience in writing works of fiction. However, when it comes to critical works and pedagogical practice, that free choice is rescinded. African scholars have to engage in such practices via the medium of English or Afrikaans. Yet they are aware, at least by now, that their critical studies are of no consequence to either English or Afrikaans literary studies. Why then are African literary scholars not conscious that by writing their studies in non-vernacular languages, they are depriving millions of their potential audience that might have interest in and benefit from such works? Then if this is the position in African literary study, who actually derives benefit from this curious arrangement?

Up to now the answer to this question has been avoided. It is not hard to believe that it remains a concern to many scholars of African literature in indigenous languages. However, much as it is hard to accept, Mphahlele's (cf. Barnett, 1983:260) remarks so far bring us the closest to the core of the problem when he says the following about his teaching of African literature at tertiary level:

> For me it is a living in the same way that millions of other blacks work for whites to earn a living. [...] Teaching at Wits is the best I can do. I am doing research most of the time and so I have the basis for a lot of extra-mural activity. [...] **In this way I can do a lot to teach young blacks outside the**

formal schooling situation (my emphasis).[1]

Mphahlele's remarks clearly point out that the schooling environment, including research, is as yet not a base from which the scholar of African literature can contribute to his/her natural community. This means that African scholars that seek to make any contribution to their own communities can only do so outside the formal institutions. Therefore the teaching of African literature at tertiary level remains largely a means of making a living rather than a programme for community development.

This study is undertaken under similar circumstances with the author fully aware that the majority of the potential Basotho target audience is excluded. Further that the research will also be of no real consequence to English literature, the language in which it is written. Therefore the only impact this study hopes to make to the Basotho community can only be indirect, through extra-mural activities. However, with the emergence of a strong consciousness of post-modernism, multilingualism and multiculturalism, which unlike modernism seem to be re-centring cultures rather than de-centring them (cf. Rogers,1996:1-2 and Featherstone, 1995:72-85), as well as the present call for the African Renaissance, there is hope that this situation might change sooner than later. The role played by Mphahlele, Nkosi and Soyinka to that effect, are well-covered in Selepe's (1993) dissertation, 'Black Protest Literature in South Africa: A Materialist Analysis'. The dissertation also covers Soyinka and Gordimer's literary award winning achievements.

---

[1] Any prolific scholar of African literature will become aware that this observation is not intendet to underrate the contribution Mphahlele has made but to highlight the dilemma faced by committed scholars of African literature generally.

DECLARATION

I declare that TOWARDS THE AFRICAN THEORY OF LITERARY PRODUCTION: PERSPECTIVES ON THE SESOTHO NOVEL is my own work and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been acknowledged by means of complete references.

DATE: 1999-06-30

(T J SELEPE)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my sincere gratitude and deepest appreciation to the following:

I wish, firstly, to thank my promoter, Prof. C F Swanepoel, for his support, scholarly guidance and encouragement to make the best out of this project. His resourcefulness, his appreciation for independent thinking, knowledge of African literary studies in general and of Sesotho literature in particular, have been of great help to me.

I wish to thank my colleagues in the Department of African Languages at the University of South Africa and the School of Languages at Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education (Vaal Triangle Campus) for encouragement and fruitful discussion. I also wish to thank Prof. M A Moleleki, Head of the Department of African Languages at the University of the Orange Free State, for support and advice.

I wish to thank Mrs Hleziphi Napaai, subject librarian at the University of South Africa, and the library staff of the Potchefstroom University for CHE (Vaal Triangle Campus) for library information assisting me to acquire the necessary sources. I also wish to thank Mrs W J Kuyler of the ITM for typesetting the manuscript as well as Prof Wally Willies, Director of the School of Languages at PU for CHE (Vaal Triangle Campus) for offering to edit the final draft. Lastly, I wish to thank God for giving me life and strength to finish the project.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my wife, Malesimola, and our two boys, Lesimola and Teboho. Their understanding and support have been a great source of strength to me. To them, together with all the children of Africa I say; they should never doubt their God given uniqueness because the Creator says:

> "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born
> I set you apart, I appointed you as a prophet to the nations" (Jer. 1:5).

SUMMARY

Critical studies and creative works in the Sesotho novel have made some of the important contributions in Sesotho literary history in particular, and African literary history in general. However, such contribution has been dictated by a particular history and an ideology. The world-view in literary practice that emerged from that history is the one that tends to divorce literature, literary study and language from society. Consequently, this study identifies this practice as a problem that needs to be addressed.

This study argues from this perspective that literature, literary study and language should be re-established as integral parts in a manner that pedagogical practice would translate into positive social practices. To realise this ideal the study approaches the study of the Sesotho novel from the perspective of literary production. The theory of literary production insists that literature is a form of social production. This argument becomes even more pertinent to the study of the novel, which is viewed as having profound elements of realism that mirror society.

A consideration of the Sesotho novel as a form of literary production that is linked to other forms of social production immediately leads to the question of the development of the Sesotho novel. The possibilities that are identified include external influence and internal evolution in the development of the Sesotho novel. These possibilities also have a bearing on the study of the Sesotho novel in particular and the study of the African novel in general.

In order to pursue the argument to its logical conclusion, the development of the Sesotho novel is divided into three periods: 1900-1930; 1930-1960 and the 1960s-1990s. Each of these periods demonstrates a particular ideological leaning that is akin to the material conditions of each period. Taking this trend as a pattern in the development of the Sesotho novel, this study advocates an approach that links literature and literary studies to society.

Key terms: Sesotho novel, African literature, epic, folklore, literary production, mode of production, language, social development, audience, pedagogical practice.

PREFACE

Responding to a question raised at a conference held in Kampala in 1962 on 'What is African literature?' Richard Rive answered:

> I am certainly not the product of a clash of cultures, rather a synthesis of all experience, and the boundaries are more, more comprehensive than Africa and Europe. A writer creating in his own small corner, must of necessity have an approach differing from another in another small corner, depending on who he is, where he is, and what he is writing. Different stimuli must produce different responses (cf. Barnett, 1983:264).

Rive's statement is as relevant today as it was more that thirty years ago because things have hardly changed in African literature. We are moving into the 21st century still grappling with the same question, 'What is African literature?' Answers that have been provided ever since the debate on this question started have so far failed to provide enduring solutions. This failure to resolve such a basic question can be ascribed to the fact that the basic issues in African literature have not been addressed. Most outstanding among them is the question of language.

Such a question is not even raised in other languages except in the case of African languages and literatures. The categories such as African literature in European languages and African literature in indigenous African languages have made a solution to this problem even more elusive. This problem becomes more serious when it comes to critical studies. Barnett (1983:253) sets the tone for this scenario when he says the following in the introduction of his study:

> The leading scholars of African literature, such as D.D.T. Jabavu, S.M. Guma, Daniel P. Kunene, C.L.S. Nyembezi and B.W. Vilakazi had produced studies written in English of African literature, but their concern was only with writers in vernacular and is therefore not part of this study.

Barnett's exclusion of these so-called 'leading black scholars of African literature' in his study on *Black South African literature in English* is understandable. He recognises the 'outstanding' contribution of these scholars to African literature but

it is not relevant to English literary study because the primary sources are in vernaculars. This then raises another curious question: If the critical works of these leading scholars of African literature do not have a place in English literary study, where do they belong?

One would have expected that by virtue of the languages in which the critical studies of these works are written, they should qualify for consideration or at least interest the English audience. If this is the case, then what will make such studies relevant to vernacular literatures and interesting to the African audience because they are not written in vernaculars? A related question is therefore why are critical studies in vernacular literatures, including pedagogical practice, conducted via the medium of English and even Afrikaans, not vernaculars?

This scenario has another dimension namely, the implications of this arrangement for African writers and critics themselves. Writers have a free choice of language and audience in writing works of fiction. However, when it comes to critical works and pedagogical practice, that free choice is rescinded. African scholars have to engage in such practices via the medium of English or Afrikaans. Yet they are aware, at least by now, that their critical studies are of no consequence to either English or Afrikaans literary studies. Why then are African literary scholars not conscious that by writing their studies in non-vernacular languages, they are depriving millions of their potential audience that might have interest in and benefit from such works? Then if this is the position in African literary study, who actually derives benefit from this curious arrangement?

Up to now the answer to this question has been avoided. It is not hard to believe that it remains a concern to many scholars of African literature in indigenous languages. However, much as it is hard to accept, Mphahlele's (cf. Barnett, 1983:260) remarks so far bring us the closest to the core of the problem when he says the following about his teaching of African literature at tertiary level:

> For me it is a living in the same way that millions of other blacks work for whites to earn a living. [...] Teaching at Wits is the best I can do. I am doing research most of the time and so I have the basis for a lot of extra-mural activity. [...] **In this way I can do a lot to teach young blacks outside the**

formal schooling situation (my emphasis).[1]

Mphahlele's remarks clearly point out that the schooling environment, including research, is as yet not a base from which the scholar of African literature can contribute to his/her natural community. This means that African scholars that seek to make any contribution to their own communities can only do so outside the formal institutions. Therefore the teaching of African literature at tertiary level remains largely a means of making a living rather than a programme for community development.

This study is undertaken under similar circumstances with the author fully aware that the majority of the potential Basotho target audience is excluded. Further that the research will also be of no real consequence to English literature, the language in which it is written. Therefore the only impact this study hopes to make to the Basotho community can only be indirect, through extra-mural activities. However, with the emergence of a strong consciousness of post-modernism, multilingualism and multiculturalism, which unlike modernism seem to be re-centring cultures rather than de-centring them (cf. Rogers,1996:1-2 and Featherstone, 1995:72-85), as well as the present call for the African Renaissance, there is hope that this situation might change sooner than later. The role played by Mphahlele, Nkosi and Soyinka to that effect, are well-covered in Selepe's (1993) dissertation, 'Black Protest Literature in South Africa: A Materialist Analysis'. The dissertation also covers Soyinka and Gordimer's literary award winning achievements.

---

[1] Any prolific scholar of African literature will become aware that this observation is not intendet to underrate the contribution Mphahlele has made but to highlight the dilemma faced by committed scholars of African literature generally.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The study of African literature has from the time it became part of academic discourse been fraught with controversy[1]. This controversy has always revolved around the 'Africanness' of African literature as opposed to the imposed Western notion of what is supposed to be African literature. This unfortunate development has led to a situation where the indigenous African scholars of African literature became pre-occupied with the justification of what they conceive as African literature as opposed to what the imposed culture of imperialism conceives as African literature. As a result of this unfortunate development, Tapping (1990:73) comments as follows about the genuine concerns of the indigenous African scholars:

> They assert what should be obvious about the 'Africanness' of African literatures. African literature they write, "has its own traditions, models and norms". And its historical and cultural imperatives impose upon its concerns and constraints quite different, sometimes altogether antithetical to the European.

While Tapping seems to capture the gist of the problem plaguing African literature, his imposing arrogance to water down the genuine concerns of the indigenous African scholars of African literature is no different from the overbearing tendency of the Western world towards Africa. This overbearing attitude persists in spite of Julien's (1995:603) sobering observation that, "Tradition, is like the past, is within us, not behind us...Discourses which claim to translate [one's origins] engage in mystification." She also asserts that "open-ended examination of how aesthetics, cultural, and social needs are met by reference to and imitation or parodying of structures of oral genres" are doomed to failure (op. cit.).

---

[1] Ngara explains this problem extensively in chapter 1 of *Stylistic Criticism and the African Novel* (1982).

Attempts to prove that the study of African literature can be subjected to Western critical thinking, or attempts to oppose such a practice by attempting to prove that African literature is different from Western literature, is one illustration of this doomed failure. These tendencies have created a vicious circle within which African literary study is unable to break free. Williams (1992:8) laments that such attempts are tragically inadequate because in essence they are engaged in "theorising the industrialisation of culture and hence of literature".

In advocating for a theoretical shift from the Western-African dichotomy, Williams is aware that the stakes are heavily loaded against Africa. However he insists that something needs to be done lest Africa is reduced to a mere supplier of raw materials of the Western world:

> The current situation, with its ominous echoes of the metropolitan centre versus the underdeveloped periphery of early capitalism, threatens to transform African literature into inert raw material destined for processing in Western intellectual factories (op. cit.)

In order to break away from this trend that has almost become an innate character of African literary study, Williams suggests a shift from traditional scholarship to issues of cultural production hence the mooting of the theory of literary production in this study. Williams believes that:

> Nothing captures this shift more graphically than the fact that the centre for serious study of African Literature has shifted from Africa itself to the West. In the relentless globalisation of culture, the desperately unequal exchange between the powerful societies of the First World and the impoverished nations of the Third World, the cultural producer in Africa can exercise little or no control over the uses to which his products are put (op. cit.)

It is this unbalanced relationship between the developed and the under-developed world, the powerful and the powerless societies, that has motivated this study. By

employing theories of production this study hopes to interrogate the manner in which the raw materials in African literary study in general, and the Sesotho novel in particular, have been put into practice. The contention of this study is therefore to mediate, not to originate something entirely new, but to initiate a discourse that will focus on something new. As Frow (1986:1) asserts:

> Any beginning is determined by the exclusions it operates and the conclusions it repeats. [Therefore] A beginning is not an origin [...] to begin is to interrupt these exchanges, to make a point in a series and disregard what precedes it. A beginning is always a coming between – an intervention, and mediation.

It is therefore not the intention of this study to make a beginning, in the strict sense of the word. Rather it intends to make a kind of an intervention. Consequently, by focussing on the Sesotho novel, this study seeks to shift emphasis, not necessarily focus, from the past and current literary theoretical approaches on the study of the Sesotho novel, which tended to confine themselves to certain areas of interest only. Such focus has chiefly limited the study of African literature in general, and the Sesotho novel in particular, to the discussion of the formal features of genres and their evaluation. This tendency can chiefly be attributed to the socio-political climate under which such studies were conducted. Generally, formal features are used conveniently as a focus to avoid addressing teething socio-political issues inherent in African literary study.

Consequently, seeing that this study is undertaken within the ever-changing socio-political climate, it implies that attendant socio-political and historical factors will form part and parcel of this study. Such factors include the history of colonialism, apartheid legacy, events leading to the attainment of freedom in South Africa as well as mechanisms used to redress past injustices and to promote the process of democracy and nation building.

1.2 Aim of study

The aim of this study is to consider the extent to which material conditions serve as signifying factors in literary production as they are manifest in both the content and

context of literary discourse. Consequently, the study will not elaborate exclusively on the literariness of texts as well as the importance of the nitty-gritty issues related to formal features, *per se*[2]. The primary objective of this thesis is rather to consider those (literary) features as significants of the material conditions as they pertained during various historical periods that will be considered.

The objective of this study should therefore be understood in this context as an attempt to shift focus from the traditional trend of attaching importance to the literary work as a finished product only. The intention of this thesis is also to demonstrate that there is more 'literary' information that can be uncovered by looking at some of the signifying factors, which contribute to mediating in and unpack the process of the production of the Sesotho novel.

1.2.1 Why a shift of emphasis from traditional scholarship?

The emergence of a new constitution in South Africa, which is intended to introduce, guide and maintain democratic values, is a primary motivation for a change of emphasis from traditional literary scholarship. Such democratic values are enshrined in the Bill of Rights, which guarantees *inter alia* religious, cultural and language rights (cf. Act 108 of 1996). The other motivation is the founding of the Pan South African Language Board (PANSALB) which has as part of its mission, the protection of languages in general, and the promotion of the previously disadvantaged languages. The other development are multilingualism, multiculturalism and the issues of globalisation to which the Basotho and other world communities should make a contribution, especially the communities whose voices were never heard. These and other related developments give the landscape of the study of languages and literatures in South Africa a new texture. Suddenly the issue of formerly marginalised cultures, religions and languages become crucial. Consequently this study considers the issue of language as crucial to the study of the Sesotho novel in particular, and other African literatures in general.

[2] It is assumed that any Mosotho literary scholar is familiar with the contents of the Sesotho novel and issues covered in various researches so far. Therefore, their elaborate repetition in this study will not be contributing any new knowledge to scholarship.

To ensure that the South African society is completely healed from the brutalities of the past, and to guarantee that the atrocities of the past are never repeated, various commissions have been set up by a democratic government. These include the Gender Commission, the Youth Commission, the Human Rights Commission, etc. The other important commission is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which was not only set up to reveal the truths about the past, but to heal the country and to reconcile all South Africans[3].

Another related development on the sub-continent is the Intergovernmental Conference on Language Policies in Africa, which was held in Harare, Zimbabwe, on 25-29 November 1996. The Working Document of this conference recommends that language policies and practices in Africa must as a matter of course:

- Give each of the languages at hand a precise status and functions, specifying the use of the language both in the exercise of State functions and in relations between the State and its citizens.
- Lay down a strategy on the basis of the linguistic landscape of the country and the region. Such a strategy should define, firstly, the mechanisms to be established and the methods to be employed in order to attain the objectives set out and, secondly, the material and human resources required (ibid. p.4).

The objectives that this conference set out to achieve, especially in terms of the material and human resources required places additional demands on the equipping of specialists in various languages. This implies the equitable training of people to be deployed to undertake this task in respective languages by assigned institutions, because the methods and institutions that are in existence have been found to be either inadequate or ineffective.

The working document further expresses its concern on the exclusive reliance of language planning on the so-called empirical research. It argues that:

[3] The role of this commission will be considered in Chapter 7

> It is often maintained that language planning represents an attempt to control the future. Empirical research, however important and necessary it may be, should not be regarded as an essential prerequisite for any choice that has to be made. Looking at this overemphasis on scientific evidence and, particularly, the role of [the] political filter that is sometimes assigned to it, we can see that studies, research work and experiments are sometimes used merely as tactical means of slowing down the promotion of languages and the extension of their use (op. cit. p.12)[4].

These new developments evidently have different implications for both the material and social life in South Africa. The point this study hopes to make therefore is that those material conditions are not only the basis of the production of the Sesotho novel in particular, but they also constitute the raw material of African literature and African existence in general. They are, consequently, also crucial signifying factors in the whole process of African literary, pedagogical and social practices: Material conditions inform both the context and the content of creativity in the text, via the ideological leanings that emerge from time to time. Such material conditions influence the author's and the critic's world-views, in the same way as they influence the objectives of the market forces in relation to the consumer's reaction to those market forces themselves, seeing that literature is perceived as a social product like any other product. In this way the novel is considered to be continuously assuming a new vision or aesthetic standing. Ngara (1985:vii) aptly observes that:

> African writers are searching for a new social vision and new aesthetic standards. [...] Committed African writers are extremely sensitive to the social problems of their day and are constantly coming to grips with them, hoping to play their part in changing society for the better.

The other important area of focus will be the enduring tendency of dominant social classes, publishing houses as well as governments or their agencies, to either protect or promote certain social values by deliberately excluding others.

---

[4] The negative effect of over reliance on empirical research will be discussed in full in Chapter 7.

Such tendencies will be investigated with a view of establishing their impact on the role of various stakeholders in literary production.

Some of the arguments will be intended to highlight the fact that, as a result of both the external and internal publication policies; authors and prospective authors, including literary scholars, tend to evolve different attitudes towards publishing and authorship. The one author could, for instance, be interested only in selling ideas that he/she might consider beneficial to the public - without considering the implications of material benefits of such a product to society. The other author, might, as a result of market forces, merely write with the sole purpose of making profit from the sales of the books. The publishers may also, as business people, be primarily interested in making better profit by outdoing other competitors in the market by selling the `best' products during a particular historical era. Such partisan needs and desires may, in the process, cloud genuine needs and desires of the public.

From the perspective of consumers, readers may also be interested only in those literary products that seem to serve their individual/collective interests better than others do. Gatekeepers such as governments – an aspect of Repressive State Apparatus (RSAs), dominant classes or their agencies – an aspect of Ideological State Apparatus (ISAs), may on the other hand, also be chiefly interested in protecting dominant ideologies (hegemony) during the various historical eras.

Such ideologies may chiefly determine what is essential or not essential, desirable or not desirable, acceptable or not acceptable, etc. Consequently, the focus of this study is to mediate in this scenario by demonstrating that the relationship between literature and society is neither neutral nor innocent. Rather it constitutes a site of class struggle in literary study, which a theory of literary production hopes to address by investigating contending ideologies and related social practices.

The immanent ideological struggle will chiefly hinge upon contending forces trying to maintain, modify, exclude or introduce other ideologies. This observation explains

the need to use theories of literary production in this study to address this major concern. This need also explains why the study of the Sesotho novel will focus on the dialectic relationship between literature and society. Such an approach will enable us to look at the (social) forces involved in the conception of a literary work, including the stages of production and consumption. Goldmann's (1975:7) related observation with regard to the novel captures this argument aptly where he says:

> The novel form seems [...], in effect, to be the transposition on the literary plane of everyday life in the individualistic society created by market production. There is a rigorous homology between the literary form of the novel [...] and the everyday relation between man and commodities in general, and by extension between men and other men, in a market society [...].

Such a homology between literature and society is seldom self-evident, if ever, and the critics of the Sesotho novel have often missed it thus far. Adding to this rationale, of literature-society relationship, Eagleton (1976:60) claims that:

> We may see literature as a *text*, but we may also see it as a social activity, a form of social and economic production, which exists alongside, and interrelates, with, other such forms.

Studies undertaken in the study of the Sesotho novel, so far, as will be illustrated below, have chiefly missed this point by focussing on various surveys of the texts, ignoring crucial factors which contribute to their (texts) peculiar features. This practice has therefore often led scholars to provide partial answers to questions they have attempted to probe.

Works resulting from such traditional practices make one common omission: They do not explain the actual effects societal processes have on literature and literary practice. In this study the text-society relationship is considered crucial because it seeks to reveal various modes of production and factors involved in the production

of the Sesotho novel. Some of the studies conducted on the study of the Sesotho novel will be discussed below to validate the omission referred to earlier.

1.2.2 Overview of some of the studies covered in the Sesotho novel

There are several studies that have been covered in the study of the Sesotho novel, some minor and some major. A survey of the samples of such studies and their inputs constitute not only a necessary frame of reference but they also form an important point of departure as well, in this study.

1.2.2.1 Minor works

Among some of the minor works, excepting reviews, published on the study of the Sesotho novel to date, one could, as an illustration, refer to the following: *B M Khaketla's Mosali a nkhola* by Swanepoel (1980:334-348). In this article Swanepoel explores aspects such as theme, plot, characterisation and historical aspects of this Sesotho novel. In the other article, *Historicity and Mofolo's Chaka: A comparison of text and possible sources*, Swanepoel (1988:23-27) concentrates on the aspects of the raw materials such as history and culture which could have possibly informed the conceptualisation of Mofolo's novel. The next article, also by Swanepoel (1989b:145-53), *The Leselinyana Letters and early reception of Thomas Mofolo's Chaka*, seems to be the extension of the former, where Swanepoel explores the manner in which Mofolo's novel was received by the reading public.

There are two other minor studies, which have also been conducted on Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka*. The one is *Thomas Mofolo's Chaka: Literary interpretations and modifications of a hero* by Sulzer (1984:1-15). Sulzer here is mainly concerned with issues revealed in Chaka as a hero, issues such as dichotomous oppositions of Christianity and animism, individualism and politics, nature and civilisation. The other study is *Some Interpretative Approaches to Thomas Mofolo's Chaka* by Scheub (1970:237-255). Scheub's study too, focusses mainly on the characterisation of Chaka, and it draws material from both historical and cultural issues.

While these works do succeed in shedding some light on the aspects addressed, they still ignore the critical question of the dialectical relationship between literature and society, which omission is the main focus of theories of literary production.

1.2.2.2 Major studies

The trend in literary study that has been expressed above and the gap it has created also holds for some of the major works such as dissertations and theses. For instance, one of the first major works in the study of the Sesotho novel is Tekateka's (1967) MA dissertation entitled *A critical survey of Thomas Mofolo's writing*. This work glosses over some of the aspects of the novel pointed out above and is peripheral with regard to the nature of and the issues relating to literary production. The dissertation remains but a general survey of *Moeti oa Bochabela* (1907), *Pitseng* (1910) and *Chaka* (1925) wherein Tekateka focuses on aspects relating to characterisation, language and style. Tekateka also touches on the role of the missionaries in the development of Sesotho literature as well as cultural aspects that characterise Mofolo's works.

Prominent among the aspects he refers to in this literary study is the tension surrounding the interpretation of Mofolo's novels from the (traditional) African perspective and from the Western (Christian) perspectives. The problem is manifest in both the early and latter readers of Mofolo's novels. This problem endures in various guises to this day and has not been adequately addressed.

Tekateka's study is, however, marked by its refusal, even at that early stage of the history of the Sesotho novel, to accept the notion of a simplistic external influence of the European novel on the Sesotho novel. For instance, while he acknowledges that in writing *Moeti oa Bochabela*, Mofolo could have used some of the material from Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Tekateka asserts that Mofolo's "own Sotho spirit breathes throughout the whole work" (p.13).

Tekateka's study was followed by the works of Moloi (1973) and Gildenhuys (1973) who produced doctoral theses entitled; *The Southern Sotho novel: A study of its*

forms, theme and expression and *'n Kritiese ontleding van die aard en ontwikkeling van die novelle in Suid-Sotho*, respectively. Moloi's thesis focuses on a few specific aspects of the novel namely, form, theme and expression. Moloi also attempts to highlight factors responsible for distinct trends in the development and criticism of the Sesotho novel over a number of years. Among these are the attitudes of the missionaries, education authorities and the Western critics regarding their aesthetic attitudes on what is `good' or `bad' in the Sesotho novel.

Moloi's study is so far unequalled in its defence of the uniqueness of the Sesotho novel as well as his challenge for the slavish use of European critique models in judging the Sesotho literature in general, and the novel in particular. His assertion that "To appreciate Sotho creative writing one must understand the socio-economic-political milieu in which Sotho authors find themselves" (p.14), is a hallmark of his thesis. Had Moloi pursued this argument to its logical conclusion, or had he adopted a psycho-analytical approach in the entire study, which is his last chapter, he could have, through this approach, addressed some of the crucial questions relating to text-society relationship and literary production reasonably well.

Gildenhuys' study, on the other hand, chiefly constitutes a historical survey, a process which brings him teetering on this important question of the relationship between literature and society, especially with regard to the exploration of themes in the novels he surveys. He seems to have approached his study from a position that vacillates between implicit New Criticism and Psychoanalysis and hence could not consider the literature he surveyed as a product of a process of labour, revealing various processes and modes of production. Had he probed the interplay of forces that have given rise to the themes he identifies more pragmatically, he might not have easily concluded that:

> Die Suid-Sotho skrywer beperk sy tema tot die uitbeelding van hoofsaaklik die uitwerking van, of botsing tussen, tradisionele en christelike of westerse beskawingsbeginsels ..." (p.274).

Had Gildenhuys gone further than just viewing the limiting of the Sesotho novel to the illustration of the clash between tradition and Christianity or Western civilisation as just a thematic feature, he could have arrived at a different conclusion. This thematic feature is in fact an important signifying factor of a wide conspiracy by the Western world to control and dominate Africa in all spheres of life. Themes in most Sesotho novels allude to this conspiracy.

In fact, a theme portrayed in a novel mainly "constitutes a literary transposition of the contradiction between exchange value and use value in the capitalist mode of production" (Simonse, 1982:456). Consequently, Gildenhuys' thesis is also superficial in relation to the question of literary production because he does not devise a theory, which could have made such an undertaking feasible. However, notwithstanding the omission of literary production, Gildenhuys' study remains one of the informative general surveys, to date, of the Sesotho novel.

The other major work in the study of the Sesotho novel, is Swanepoel's (1976) doctoral thesis, *Die wêreld van Tjhaka*. By comparison, his thesis is the closest so far, towards exploring the nature of the relationship between literature and society, which is the basis of literary production. The thesis examines some of the historical and social factors, which might have influenced the conception of Mofolo's novel, as well as its reception by the reading public who are the consumer of the product.

The critical device of intertextuality, which Swanepoel uses early in his study, demonstrates that there is indeed an important relationship between literature and society. This is demonstrated later in the study through the use of the unique language idiom, which Mofolo employs in portraying the theme of the text. The use of this literary technique is precisely what gives a peculiar context to Mofolo's text. It is for this reason that Swanepoel is able to conclude later in his study that the *wêreld* comprises

> ...alles waarby die onderliggende idee, die karakters en hulle handelinge teen 'n bepaalde agtergrond, die leser in sy omgewing en tydsomstandighede betrek (ibid. p.230).

However, also in this case, the question of a dialectical relationship between literature and society, which links to the view of a text as production, does not receive adequate attention. It becomes easy therefore to understand the focus of Swanepoel's thesis because his study was not intended to address this specific question of literary production.

Some aspects of Swanepoel's thesis have subsequently been amplified later in two minor works namely, *Historicity and Mofolo's Chaka: A comparison of text and possible sources* (Swanepoel, 1988:23-27) and *The Leselinyana Letters and early reception of Thomas Mofolo's Chaka* (Swanepoel, 1989b:145-53). Both these minor works, as pointed out above, are the closest, without being precise, to touching on the significance of text-society relationship. Some aspects of this text-society relationship are the material conditions, which Swanepoel assumes have had an impact on the production of *Chaka*. Firstly, he refers to the historical and socio-cultural issues - the raw materials, as possible sources from which the text derives. Secondly, he elaborates on the reaction of various readers - consumers, towards Mofolo's work as expressed in the *Leselinyana*. This latter aspect is interpreted in this thesis as part of the process of consumption.

The other work worth mentioning at this stage, is D P Kunene's publication, *Thomas Mofolo and the emergence of Sesotho prose* (1989). Kunene makes some interesting observations relating to the circumstances that might have led to the emergence of the works of this great author, Thomas Mofolo. He also suggests the possible impact such works have made on the Sesotho prose in general, although not explaining it from the broader perspective of literary production.

Kunene also probes questions relating to the historical circumstances relevant to eras before and after Mofolo, i.e. how they have affected Sesotho prose writing.

This also, Kunene does without being explicit about this trend as specific phase in the process of literary production. Therefore, much as Kunene's work provides useful insights relating to the development of the Sesotho prose writing and its criticism, he too falls short of seriously addressing the issue of literary production as a specific literary phenomenon.

1.2.3 Why a theory of literary production?

The notion production in literary aesthetics plays a prominent role in modern thought largely because of the versatility of the concepts it handles (cf. Eagleton, 1990:3). It should be conceded by now that much as numerous studies of note have been undertaken in the study of the Sesotho novel, no serious attempt has been made, so far, to conduct a study of this genre from the perspective of literary production. Literary production is considered in this study as one of the other aesthetic regions, which could have advanced Sesotho literary scholarship. This approach is chosen, in part, to demonstrate that although there are endless possibilities to literary study, not all can address the question of social development. Therefore one of the ultimate objectives of this study is also to raise the critic's awareness that there is a link between literary practice and social development. Most important, this study hopes to demonstrate that literary practice is another site of class and political struggles.

Theories of literary production concede that there is a power struggle in literary study as there is in social existence (cf. Eagleton, 1990:3). Consequently, theories of literary production do not consider a literary text as a finished product only raised to the status of autonomy and absoluteness. Rather they consider a literary text as a product of a process of labour, informed by the context of material conditions that are generally characterised by social class struggles.

Therefore in demonstrating the context of material conditions, often expressed in class conflict, it becomes crucial for literary study to also consider the process of literary production, starting with:

- the collating of raw materials - language, beliefs, norms and values;
- the processing of the raw materials - the author's own creativity and world-view, the role of reviewers and editors;
- the role of other gatekeepers such as governments or dominant classes and their agencies as well as publishing houses, which ensure that the rules that are laid down for publication are adhered to; and finally,
- the processes of distribution, which include marketing strategies and the reaction of readers to the literary product as well as the impact such product are intended to have or might have on the reader.

This study therefore attaches special importance on the investigation of such areas as signifying factors in literary study. This position is taken because theories of literary production are considered capable of yielding information that could lead to some conclusive arguments, which have so far been missing in the study of the Sesotho novel. It is the purpose of this study, therefore, to fill in this gap by shifting emphasis and providing new insights in the study of the Sesotho novel. Such insights, it is hoped, could also be useful for the study of the Sesotho literature in general by opening new possibilities.

It should be emphasised here that such information could only be evoked from the text if the exact nature of modes of production, which characterise society, are established. This will in turn demonstrate how literature relates to society, which relationship is, according to Eagleton (1978), determined by (the process of) labour i.e. the interaction between various social forces involved in the production of a literary text.

1.3 Scope of the study: methodology

Any research study has both limitations and specific areas of focus. Such acknowledgement therefore makes it imperative to point out the scope of research and the methodology, which will be used in the study.

Firstly, the methodology adopted in this study is considered to be desirable for the needs of the present generation of literary scholarship, much as the previous scopes and methodologies were considered desirable and suitable for the past generations. It should therefore be acknowledged that changing circumstances are and should be accompanied by matching scientific enquiry in order to afford scientific research to respond to the ever-rising scientific and developmental issues. Secondly, this study contends that the success or failure of any scientific enquiry cannot only be measured in terms of what is considered as its innate characteristics. Therefore any assumed history of its successes or failures in its implementation, should not only be limited to attesting to the success or failure of the methodology. It should also reflect the success or failure of the implementation by the scientists who employ the methodology.

It is, however, not the primary objective of this study to prove the successes or failures of any of the previous methodologies *per se*, or to provide answers to all questions that may arise from previous studies. The objective is, instead, to identify areas that have not been covered as a result of the implementation of certain critical methods. Consequently, the employment of the theories of production is not to demonstrate their success or failure but to illustrate the gaps they can fill in what has already been covered. By filling in the gaps that have not been covered in the previous studies, this study will also create an opportunity to identify gaps and raise questions that can be filled and addressed by subsequent studies.

To achieve this aim a thematic selection of Sesotho novels according to three historical periods, namely 1900-1930, 1930-1960 and 1960-1990s, will be made. This thematic selection will ensure that most categories of the novels, from the pens of the novice to the accomplished author are covered. At the same time the thematic selection will circumvent any bias towards or against any author, which might have implications for the results of the study.

1.3.1 Aspects covered in the thesis

The aspects that will be covered in this study, will, because of the importance of the novel in this discourse, require adequate background information regarding the origin and the development of the novel as a starting point. This will be done via a brief survey, in chapter 2, of the development of the novel in general, by focussing firstly on the English novel by relating it to the Greek epic. This survey will also touch on the era of realism because it constitutes an important phase in the development of the English novel.

The era of realism is important in this study because of its association with the emergence of class society, which has implications for the origin and the growth of the English novel. The argument relating to this historical development of the English/Western novel will be used as a model of locating the development of the Sesotho novel in this study. The Western novel in general, which this study contends that most of its literary features are covered in the study of the English novel, does not, however, receive specific attention. It is only mentioned because of its assumed link/relationship, real or apparent, with the origin of the African novel in general and the Sesotho novel in particular.

This argument will then logically lead to the discussion of the African novel *per se*, in chapter 3, of which the Sesotho novel is part, as I shall attempt to argue. A refined theory of literary production, which will be used as a critical framework for the novels under consideration in this study, will also be formulated in chapter 3. This undertaking will be done by considering the inherent features of the African novel in general as a starting point, and by subsequently focussing on the Sesotho novel *per se*.

To make this undertaking feasible, a sample of novels which will be considered will be grouped into three historical periods namely; 1900-1930 in chapter 4, 1930-1960 in chapter 5 and 1960-1990s in chapter 6. Such a division will, in relation to the limitations of studies pointed out above, make it possible for this study to establish

various trends in the development of the Sesotho as revealed in various developmental periods.

It should be borne in mind, however, that no discussion of the development of the African novel, including that of the Sesotho novel, could be considered complete without focussing, also, on the perennial debate surrounding the definition of African literature. This debate pertains in particular to the mode of expression (language) and lived experience (socio-historical context). This situation, unfortunately, seems to have become an important factor, if not a norm, in any serious study of African literature (cf. Simonse, 1982:452).

Related to this debate, are arguments such as 'African literature must be written in indigenous languages' (Ngugi 1986 & 1993). That 'African literature cannot be adequately expressed in foreign media' (Anyidoho 1992), 'African literature, in spite of mode of expression, must reflect the African experience' (Amuta 1989, Irele 1981, Ngara 1982 & 1985), etc.

By analogy, the aspect of influence will also come into the picture i.e. whether the African novel has chiefly external European influence (Amuta 1989, Irele 1981, Ngara 1982 & 1985), or has largely evolved from the African (oral) traditional literatures (Tekateka 1967, Moloi 1973, Msimang 1983, Sirayi 1989). The resolution of these questions has implications for and is also central to the issue of African literary criticism (Amenyonu 1991).

In pursuit of the objective of criticism this study has set for itself, a number of materialist principles of (literary) production will be considered. Among such principles is the fact that Marxism views literature as a form of social production - an aspect of cultural production. Therefore considering Marx's analogy of the nature of society, it is conceded that literature belongs to the domain of the superstructure. That is, it reflects social relations, which domain is finally determined by the base structure - the economic mode of production (cf. also Eagleton, 1976:59).

The views of Althusser's (1984) and Eagleton's (1978), who are considered as structuralist Marxists, will be chiefly used and supplemented by the views of Simonse (1982) Irele (1981) Ngara (1982 & 1985) and Amuta (1989), to name but a few. The argument in this thesis, as it were, is chiefly of the view that "To speak about literature as production is to insist on its links with the infrastructure" (Knox-Shaw 1991:73-77).

Taking this position as a starting point, implies the adoption of a dialectical materialist approach whereby the functional elements of the text (plot, theme, milieu, etc) will be looked at in relation to the functional elements of society (ideologies, belief systems, culture, etc.). These are represented in the relationship between the Ideological State Apparatuses (economic, political, ideological, etc) and the Repressive State Apparatuses (government, military, courts, etc.) In other words, "we are concerned [...] with how the text comes to be what it is because of the specific determinations of its mode of production" (Eagleton, 1978:48).

This line of argument therefore also recognises the fact that society, including its formations, functions by ideology (the lived experience of people). Linked to this is the idea of utopia, whose marriage with ideology is considered crucial for the transformation of a developing society (cf. Holscher & Romm, 1989). This study will therefore argue that ideology and utopia are ultimately reflected in both the text and literary criticism, which inevitably reflect existing mode(s) of production and the resultant class conflicts.

1.4 Limitations of the study

This study, as an intervention and a beginning of another process in the study of the Sesotho novel, presupposes the incorporation, the exclusion and/or refinement of certain views relating to the study of the novel in general, and the Sesotho novel in particular. This will be done with full cognisance of the fact that "The novel is seen as a literary form in which fundamental social contradictions are reflected" (Simonse, 1982:455). Such an awareness will then necessitate the reconceptualisation, not necessarily the originating, of a number of notions; by way of mediating between the `what has been' and the `what should be' according to Frow's (1986:1) observation

stated earlier in this regard. Most important is the fact that a beginning is in fact mediating between points of view, not necessarily the originating of such views.

Through a process of mediation, which this study attempts to make, it is hoped that the study of the Sesotho novel can be placed in different aesthetic regions and viewed from new perspectives. Such mediation, it is hoped, will be achieved by adopting a two-pronged approach i.e. using theory and practice simultaneously. This means that a critical framework based on theories of production in general, and literary production in particular, will be involved and devised so they can be readily used in the critic of the texts selected for this study.

The study will therefore use selected texts, regarded as samples of the various themes and historical periods in the study of the Sesotho. This method of selection presupposes that not all of the Sesotho novels written so far will be covered; nor does it mean that those covered will be dealt with exhaustively. They will only be studied with a view of demonstrating certain trends during particular historical periods.

This further implies that, the attainment of the objective of this study, by its very nature, imposes particular constraints on this undertaking. It neither allows for an exhaustive exposition of the theory of production itself, or an in-depth critique of each of the literary texts, which will be considered in this study. This also means that the study will chiefly be preliminary where focus will be on various modes of production which are considered to be characteristic of the development of the Sesotho novel to date.

1.5 Conclusion

In this introductory chapter I have tried to point out that this study is not undertaken merely to disprove or endorse what has been produced and said regarding the study of the Sesotho novel. Rather, it attempts to address a specific need. The need that is addressed here is to establish the various modes of production, which

characterise the development of the Sesotho novel via the use of theories of literary production.

However, being a pioneering work, this thesis cannot claim to have covered and provided every detail of this field of study when it is finally completed. The ultimate product of this study will, on the one hand, lay the basis for more detailed and more specific research projects. It will also raise the need to study the Sesotho novel from different perspectives, in particular from the perspective of literary production. Such an approach will definitely call into question the issues of language and social development, which have so far been under-played if not totally ignored.

There is also an implicit aim, which this study hopes to achieve, which is the need to identify and to critically evaluate the value and the relevance of literary theories in the study of African literature. This means to demonstrate a need to assess the measure of success the implementation of a particular literary theory can attain, when applied in textual analysis, by eliciting valuable information relating to the text and its context. As a matter of fact, in the final analysis this thesis attempts to make a strong case against literary practices that tend to strip literary texts of their contexts. Pursuing such practices, as Ngara (1985:37) observes, "is to sink into empty and sterile academicism".

A literary critique adopted in this study hopes, primarily, to make it possible for critics to be aware of such pitfalls created by a tendency to absolutise certain approaches in literary study, because:

> Nothing could be more disabled than a ruling rationality, which can know nothing beyond its own concepts, forbidden from enquiring into the very stuff of passion and perception. How can the absolute monarch of Reason retain legitimacy if...the 'rabble' of senses remains forever beyond its ken? (Eagleton, 1990:14).

At another level, the study is intended, as the ultimate objective, to create other possibilities which will assist in addressing a host of other perennial questions relating to the `Africanness' of African literature as a unique and autonomous literary tradition characterised by its own peculiar history.

Consequently, research output must, through reason that most of immaterial faculties ponder, grasp the grossly sensuous by finding some ways of penetrating the world of perception because

> [...] what makes things available to empirical knowledge in the first place, their palpable materiality, is also in a devastating irony what banishes them beyond recognition (op. cit. p.15)

The success of such a literary venture, I hope, will lay the basis for the genuine promotion of African literature and languages, as well as to encourage honest critical enquiry in their evaluation. I also envisage that such literary approach and critical enquiry should, among others, also demonstrate that:

> Literature is as much a part and product of the world as any other signifying process and is as much part of reality as a reflection on it (Webster, 1993:55).

Pursued from this perspective, this study hopes to unequivocally demonstrate that:

> a literary text is one of the most vital areas of human `experience' [...] in the sense of the events represented in the text and the reader's response to them (op. cit.).

Considering everything, the overall intention of this study is therefore an attempt to illustrate the validity of its argument by insisting that any attempt in the study of African literature, which ignores the basic issues of language and social development, will be tantamount to academic miscarriage. Socio-cultural and

political forces have, since April 1994, become too strong to accommodate the opposite. The political freedoms and the civil rights wrought by that eventful occasion in the history of South Africa can no longer be denied nor delayed. Anything to the contrary, can only spell disaster if not national suicide.

CHAPTER 2

PERSPECTIVES ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NOVEL: THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

2.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to provide a selective overview of the development of the European novel, especially the English novel, essentially because of the influence it is assumed to have had on the African novel[1]. However, focus will not be on the novels themselves, but to a large extent on the circumstances which characterised their development. This objective will be achieved by considering the development of the novel by tracing it from the Greek epic. Such an approach is essential because, one of the distinguishing features of the novel, like the epic, is the portrayal of the 'hero' figure.

The portrayal of this 'hero' figure is an important characteristic feature of both the novel and the epic. Such portrayal will, however, be considered specifically in relation to changes in modes of production that led to the rise of the novel, following the epic. This argument should not be understood to imply that the epic stopped when the novel emerged. The emphasis is rather on the possible factors, which changed the portrayal of the hero, as the manifestion of the relevant socio-historical periods. The era of idealism therefore constitutes an important frame of reference in the development the argument made in this section.

The development of this argument will also necessitate a consideration of some of the movements that are associated with the rise of the novel, especially the era of realism. The era of realism is important in this study because it is usually associated

---

[1]The possible influence by novels from other languages such as French and Portuguese on the African novel has been noted but it is not considered expedient to dwell on a specific discussion of this subject in this study. Firstly because the English novel is considered to be representative of basic European trends. Secondly because there is no sufficient evidence which suggests that novels from these languages played any significant role in the development of the Sesotho novel.

not only with the rise of the novel but with its links with the Industrial Revolution as well. It is precisely as a result of the Industrial Revolution that a new world-view resulting from a new mode of production, namely, capitalism was initiated. A consideration of this development therefore makes the concept of production essential for this study.

Subsequent to this point in the line of argument, will be the issue of criticism where a need for the use of a theory of literary production in the critique of the African novel will be mooted. Such a proposition will be made by way of demonstrating why the theory of literary production is important in the critique of the African novel in general, and the Sesotho novel in particular. The development of this proposition will, in turn, necessitate a brief look at some of the problems relating to the definition of African literature of which the Sesotho novel is part.

2.2 A brief overview of theoretical framework

The theoretical framework around the notion of production is not part of this chapter and will be discussed in full later in the relevant section. However, for the purpose of facilitating the discussion at this stage, a broad outline will be provided. Within these confines the definition of production will be broadly understood as the:

> Dominant ideas or a system of beliefs, often called the economic mode of production, that govern the manner in which society produces its material needs, especially with "reference to the way in which the economic, the political, and the ideological aspects of society [...] are linked to each other" (Simonse, 1982:56).

Such a link between various aspects of social practices is considered crucial in this study because it also explains the link between society and culture, of which the novel is part. The argument made in this study is therefore that culture evolves from and is influenced by the social mode of existence. From a materialist point of view, such mode of social existence is chiefly determined by the economic mode of production. This economic mode of production, from a materialist perspective,

means that the manner in which people produce and reproduce their material life in order to live is inherent in their artistic works, especially the novel.

Contact between Africa and Europe is considered to have had impact, through the process of colonisation, on the African economic mode of production and subsequently on its culture. It will therefore be subsequently demonstrated that the novel, like culture, emerges within the context of processes of social interaction and social struggles. Such a notion will then explain why the novel is considered to be a product of social processes.

The pursuance of this line of argument will, as a result, lead to the argument about the assumed influence of the European novel on the African novel, which also has a bearing on the Sesotho novel. The questions of the development and the influence on the emergence of the African novel will consequently be approached principally from the perspective of the economic mode of production. Firstly, we shall consider the development of the novel, in general.

2.3 The development of the novel

The existence of the novel is not wrought by some mystic power. It is a result of particular processes, which can be rationally explained. The following sections will attempt to probe this exercise by drawing information from various sources. Furthermore it will be argued that the origin of novels is not monolithic i.e. it cannot be ascribed to a single theory. It will therefore be argued that there are various circumstances that could have inspired the rise of the novel.

2.3.1 Perspectives on the emergence of the novel

The emergence of the novel, as a latecomer in literary history, following drama and poetry, including the (Greek) epic, is often linked to the era of realism and the emergence of a capitalist economic mode of production. Such a development became increasingly associated also with the emergence of the middle class, which class arose with the advent of the Industrial Revolution.

There are two popular accounts relating to the origin of the novel that have been

widely accepted. Ian Watt in *The Rise of the Novel* (1963) sets the one forth. He argues that the novel began in England in the early eighteenth century, "as the product of epistemological and sociological changes, that its essential feature is the circumstantial narrative..." (cf. Reed, 1981:20).

The other account pertains to Hegel's, who views the novel as a `bourgeois prose epic' (cf. Hall, 1979:64). Sanders' (1978:3) interpretation of this literary development is that "The epic strain endured a metamorphosis into the novel." These arguments sound plausible if contrasted with the narrative structure of the novel, and considering the fact that the epic may be defined as a long narrative poem which recounts the heroic deeds of a legendary figure in a number of episodes.

I could also mention, as an illustration, the fact that some of the first and most popular epic titles are, *Iliad* and, *Odyssey*, composed by the Greek poet, Homer, around the eighth century BC. The *Odyssey*, for instance, narrates the various episodes of the adventures of the hero, Odyssey, during his voyage home from the Trojan War to his kingdom of Ithaca (Webster's Family Encyclopaedia, 1991:1223).

From the above exposition, the similarities between the epic and the novel become evident. For instance, in the definition of the epic given above, one could immediately identify the notions that link the novel to the epic, namely, a `long narrative' and a `hero' figure. Another aspect of the link, which one could consider is that the legendary character of the hero, is revealed in `a number of episodes' in the narrative whether it is an epic or a novel.

Lukacs, in *The Theory of the Novel* (1971), elaborates on Hegel's view of the novel as a `bourgeois epic', by comparing the portrayal of the hero in the epic to the portrayal of the hero in the novel. He draws the following conclusion: "the fundamental form-determining intention of the novel is objectivised as the psychology of the novel's heroes: they are seekers" (ibid. p.60).

Hall (1971:64) argues in the same vein by explaining Lukacs' notion of `seekers' thus: "... the novel is the form in which the hero searches for authentic values". In other words, the world is perceived as degraded and therefore the hero searches for

those values, which are possibly other degraded values, which could restore normality in the world. Hence Goldman's (1964:4) assertion that: "As the story of a degraded search of authentic values in an inauthentic world, the novel is necessarily both a biography and a social chronicle."

This search for authentic values then brings the novel closer to reality than any other genre before it, thus making the novel realist in nature. It should be noted, however, that such values are, of necessity, sought from peculiar circumstances. Such circumstances are considered to have arisen from certain forms of existence as well as the pursuance of certain beliefs, considered in this study either as a basis of or a result of certain modes of economic production.

It is evident from the foregoing exposition that the 'circumstances' which derive from the economic mode(s) of production, are central in distinguishing the portrayal of the hero in the epic, from the portrayal of the hero in the novel. It will therefore be proper to briefly examine the circumstances that characterise the portrayal of the hero in each of the two genres.

Lukacs (1971:60) provides a useful clue, which could assist in dealing with such a distinction. In contrasting the epic with the novel, Lukacs argues that "The epic gives form to a totality of life that is surrounded from within; the novel seeks, by giving form, to uncover and construct the concealed totality of life."

Such perceptions do not, as pointed out already, proceed from spontaneous processes of life but come about as a result of the effect of prevailing circumstances, which arise from disparate economic modes of production. That is, the medieval European feudalism in the case of the epic, and the capitalist mode of production in the case of the novel. These circumstances, as it were, influenced the manner in which the hero in the epic and the hero in the novel, subsequently, are conceptualised.

The circumstances that characterise the world of the epic, focus, for instance, on the interiority of man - his soul; and are circumscribed by a world of nature and the gods. It is a world that is propelled internally by natural forces, where everything

follows a particular fixed design. Consequently, the hero of the epic is hardly an individual, but part of a homogeneous whole to which his entire existence is eternally linked. Says Lukacs (1971:61):

> The epic world is either a purely childlike one in which the transgression of stable, traditional norms has to entail vengeance which again must be avenged *ad infinitum*, or else it is the perfect theodicy in which crime and punishment lie in the scales of world justice as equal, mutually homogeneous weights.

Such a scenario implies that the epic hero hardly has control over his destiny. He can not alter his circumstances because he cannot objectify his existence since everything else is homologous with him. There is, in fact, no qualitative difference, save that of the roles, between man and nature. The epic hero thus lives in a pre-determined world where there is an endless dichotomy between reward for virtue and punishment for vice, subsequently. The possibilities of the hero transcending these limits are therefore inconceivable.

Conceptualising the world in this manner clearly makes the avoidance of confrontation with outer reality possible, by withdrawing into a metaphysical world of idealism. This means, finally, the withdrawal from and the avoidance of the world that values concern, emotions and imagination above rationale. In such a world, which is naive, so to say, one of the dominant beliefs is that:

> Totality as the formative prime reality of every individual phenomenon implies that something [is] closed within itself, [which] can be completed. [And that it is] completed because everything [else] occurs within it, nothing is excluded from it and nothing points at a higher reality outside it; [therefore it is] completed because everything within it ripens to its own perfection and, by attaining itself, [it] submits to [the given] limitations (Lukacs, 1971:34).

In such a world there is only one form of knowledge. It is virtue, which could translate into "happiness, where beauty is the meaning of the world made visible" (ibid. p.34). Further that such a perception possible because "In Greek classical

society man is at home in the universe, moving within a rounded, complete world of immanent meaning which is adequate to his soul's demands" (Eagleton, 1976:37).

Consequently, it can be argued, in the same vein, that the circumstances that govern the world of the novel perceive the world as estranged from the interiority proscriptions. Therefore, by analogy, the hero of the novel "is the product of estrangement from the outside world" (Lukacs, 1971:66). This, consequently, makes the hero of the novel an individual. This implies that, by virtue of such a position, the hero of the novel enjoys a measure of autonomy not only from his interiority, but also from social constraints as well. It implies therefore that, as an individual, the hero of the novel is perceived as engaged in a constant attempt to alter prevailing circumstances. That is why Peck and Coyle (1993:107) observe, in this regard, that the "Novelists frequently focus on the tensions between individuals and the society in which they live [by] presenting characters that are at odds with that society."

Peck and Coyle make another enlightening observation, which demonstrates a shift in the perception of the novel, regarding the circumstances that govern the portrayal of a hero in the novel, *vis-à-vis* the portrayal of the hero in the epic. Peck and Coyle (1993:107) say that:

> The late arrival of the novel on the literary scene tells us something important about the genre: it is, above all else, a form of literature, which looks at people in society. Writers have, of course, always been interested in the world around them, but the development of the novel reflects a move away from an essentially religious view of life, towards a new interest in the complexities of everyday experience.

Such a perception evidently demonstrates a shift from the era of romanticising reality towards the era of realising reality, the era of realism, so to say. In the realist world the hero is faced with new circumstances, new circumstances not because the basic minds of people have changed, but because they have focussed in a different direction, thus experiencing the world anew. In other words, novelists have become "concerned with ordinary people and their problems in the societies in which they find themselves" (Peck and Coyle, 1993:107), wherefore a new principle

of creative writing was conceived. Says Lukacs (1971:40) in this regard:

> The genre-creating principle, which is meant here, does not imply any change in mentality; rather, it forces the same mentality to turn towards a new aim, which is essentially different from the old one.

The new aim, according to Lukacs, is to give direction in "an age in which the extensive totality of life is no longer directly given, in which the immanence of meaning in life has become a problem..." (ibid. p.56). This development evidently spells the disintegration of unity between man and nature and consequently there "could be no more spontaneous totality of being" (ibid. p.38).

These are perceptions which, according to Lukacs, free man from the interiority constraints, and in turn create conditions which are ideal for the emergence of a novel. Eagleton (1976:37) captures Lukacs' argument more poignantly when he says:

> The novel arises when that harmonious integration of man and his world is shattered; [when] the hero of fiction is now in search of a totality [that is], estranged from a world either too large or too narrow to give shape to his desires.

The character's new mindset of perceiving reality has, consequently, influenced the portrayal of the hero in the novel to an extent that the hero, as an individual, is no longer endowed with *character*. Instead the hero in the novel develops *a character* through this interaction with and within the external world by moving from one end of the social landscape to the other. Thus the individuality of the novel hero is consequently manifest in his ability to reveal a particular problem in life, and the indication of a desire to resolve it.

Lukacs' (1971:83) conclusion of his thesis on the comparison between the epic hero and the novel hero attests to this assumption in the sense that:

> The novel comprises the essence of its totality between the beginning and the end, and thereby raises an individual to infinite heights of one who must

> maintain that world equilibrium-heights which no epic individual [...] could reach because the epic individual owed his significance to the grace accorded him, not to his pure individuality.

Therefore such a portrayal of the novel hero, as an individual, is also ascribed to the *laissez fair* liberalist view of class relations which, according to Werlin (1990:47) "began to blur the distinction between the idle and the industrious poor". This phenomenon of liberalism thus induced the realisation of human potential, which was beyond the perceived idealist and romanticist limits of the past, and made it possible to ideologically analyse and to challenge existing social orders via new ideologies (or utopian views). As Werlin (1990:11) observes, ideology is generally:

> Functioning to maintain a particular social order or to bring a new one into being, an ideology will rationalise and justify its own value choices and attack alternatives and assumptions on which they are based.

It will later be observed therefore that ideology alone is not adequate for meaningful social change. Rather, ideology needs to be married with a utopian consciousness to effect any meaningful social change. However, reasoning from the ideological position only, Werlin argues this point further by saying that:

> The force of an ideological commitment is usually strengthened when it is responding to and seeking to resolve a situation of acute socio-cultural strain (ibid. p.11).

There have, unarguably, been recognisable social strains wrought by the Industrial Revolution via capitalism, for instance, a change in social power relations. Therefore, by implication, the existence of the novel should be perceived to be consistent with the capitalist social relations regardless of whether or not novelists, in responding to their situations, support the capitalist mode of production.

Whatever position the novelist or the publisher could take, there will still be a definite market for his/her product. In fact, a consumer market that comprises either casual and/or serious readers as well as critics, has ideological interests to the facts which

those novels might generate. In fact, as Werlin (1990:18) observes:

> Novels [...] have circulated chiefly among the giddy and licentious of both sexes, who read, not for the sake of thinking, but for want of thought.

Werlin substantiates the foregoing claim in an earlier argument relating to his definition of ideology. He does this by focussing particularly on the characteristics of ideology as a way of seeking to understand the social sources of the conflict between the novel's images of society and the actualities to which they refer. Says Werlin (1990:11-12) in this regard:

> When these characteristics of ideology are applied [...], they can provide a sociological explanation for the regularities in the perceptions of society we hope to uncover in the novels and for the incongruities that exists between [...] image and the actual society.

Subsequently, one of the images through which the phenomenon of the novel came to be associated with is that of an individual traversing the landscape of a capitalist society, which society is often characterised by various forms of conflict. While this image might have its roots within a particular nationality, it has also manifested itself among other nationalities, where capitalism and the novel exist side by side.

This implies that any considerations of the history of the novel, irrespective of nationality, cannot be oblivious to the origin of a novel in a specific nationality, associated with a particular social class and a particular mode of production. It is with such a realisation that Walter Reed (1981:22-23) argues that any history relating to the origins of the novel must mediate between the nationalistic and world-historical extremes. He asserts that:

> The novel can only be understood as a multinational phenomenon, rooted in European national cultures although eventually spreading to almost every modern nation-state, continent, or local region. The novel does not simply arise at one point in history and geography and go on developing steadily thereafter. Rather it arises and rearises in different regional cultures at different times (ibid.).

This assertion sounds plausible, to be accepted without further argument. However, it is important to consider a number of implications, which such assumptions raise. The first implication stems from Reed's (p.23) own admission: He makes this claim by considering the Victorian novel in England, the Southern renaissance novel in the United States and the contemporary Jewish novel. In his observations he discovered that the novel might be peculiar to a particular region or ethnic group to a point where it can be defined as the vehicle of that particular entity.

The second implication is that, conceding that any society, nationality or region has a potential to develop, given its own resources and levels of development to develop a novel, such an entity can readily develop a novel that is characteristic of its peculiar circumstances. This assumption, therefore, tends to refute the simplistic acceptance of the foreign literary influence on the African novel.

This observation also relates to comparative study, which is an essential field in literary study. The comparative study referred to is an approach whereby similar genres of different/same nationalities and different/same periods are compared. Such comparison, though useful, should however, not lead to the imposition of norms against a simplistic grading of novels on a normative scale originating from a particular nationality.

From such a perspective wider terms of reference relating to the level of social development, forms of cultures, modes of production, ideologies, etc. need to be considered as well. We need not simply accept the given `general' features of the novel as a grand design. We need, in addition, also to consider how `general' those features are, and whether or not they are both general and peculiar.

Trilling (cf. Hall, 1979:65), for instance, provides general conditions (I believe they can also be peculiar) which, in any given society, nationality, community or region, can lead to the conceptualisation of the novel. He argues that the novel has its origins in the very rise of complex societies, a phenomenon which is characteristic of any developing or developed world community.

Such complex societies are characterised by the social differentiation consistent

with the rise of moneyed economies, and a need to describe the experiences of a single individual who begins to move in unfamiliar social strata. Trilling (ibid.) admits, however, that other factors, other than the economic, can be at work in the development of the novel. This perception, however, holds water only in so far as the economic mode of production does not have impact on other social formations, something, which is highly improbable.

These observations place us now on course to consider issues relating to various movements which are associated with the rise of the novel, in particular the era of realism.

2.3.2 Realism and the novel

As pointed out already, one of the popular notions surrounding the rise of the novel is its links with the era of realism and the concomitant rise of a working middle class as a result of the Industrial Revolution. This new era also induced a shift of mindset from faith-like naivety of perceiving reality towards an empiricist view of the world. Says Watts (1976:8) in this regard:

> The ethical position of the novel consequently reflects both the practical empiricism of the middle class and its Protestant concern with the moral integrity of the individual. At this stage, the novel [...] can usefully be distinguished from the prose romance, that relatively escapist, fanciful realm to which the novel's realism bears a critical relationship.

However, much as realism is critical of romanticism, it should be realised that its dogmatic application can be counter-productive. This is especially true if one should view the novel as the portrayal of the world *as it is*. That is, something that is tantamount to *naturalism* - the cruder form of realism.

Evidently, realism, as a notion, is better understood if it is contrasted with other notions such as romanticism or idealism. The latter is characterised by the tendency to idealise feelings and content of reality over and above emphasis on 'limitations'. On the contrary, realism often employs rationale and is situated "critically and sceptically on the realm of romance" (Watts, 1976:8).

Perhaps Stephen's (1986:31) definition of realism as an "attempt to show life as it really is", though with qualification, could be considered. And better still, Peck and Coyle's (1993:119) definition of a realistic novel as an attempt "to provide a convincing illusion of life as we normally think of it". Furthermore, realism, like its sister movement, Puritanism, later in the mid-nineteenth century, was an attempt of the working people to take control of their lives and to transform society into a representative democracy where the voice of the working class could be heard (cf. Klaus 1982:7).

The rise of the English novel, especially realist novels, is generally attributed to Daniel Defoe (cf. Stephen, 1986:162). However, in spite of the era of realism, some of the novels still displayed a residue of romanticism. Stephen (1986:166) argues further that if one looks at Emily Bronte's *Wurthering Heights* (1847), one realises that the novel depicts emotions rather than reason: good and evil rather than right and wrong. According to him, this novel portrays the extraordinary love of Cathy and Heathcliff. However, according to Peck and Coyle (1993:123) such love is not possible in the real world. In this novel, as a matter of fact, the character of the hero(ine) is only determined by the fact of being either naturally good or naturally evil, not as a consequence of external stimuli.

However, realist novels such as Dickens' *Hard Times* (1854), portray the world of the hero differently. This novel demonstrates that the established social order can be challenged and changed without necessarily incurring the wrath of the gods. Dickens, in this novel, decries corruption and the torture of humanity wrought by the Industrial Revolution. He uses the character, Stephen Blackpool, a trade unionist, to advance his plot. Stephen Blackpool is portrayed as a campaigner for the betterment of the conditions of the working class.

Also of importance regarding realism is the fact that the character of the hero is developed and moulded through his interaction with social realities. In fact, say Peck and Coyle (1993:119):

> A realistic approach allows the writer to create a very full impression of what it must be like for certain people to be caught in certain dilemmas: there is a

searching presentation of the full range of psychological and social factors that are involved in every experience.

This distinction between romantic novels and realist novels does not, however, diminish the essence of the factors that gave rise to the novel namely, the rise of a class, the era of realism and the Industrial Revolution. The Industrial Revolution, via capitalism, is significant to both generations of novels because it created the market for the novel and also brought with it the emergence of the middle class literary industry.

The liberal ideology of this emerging class became predominantly "The `democratic' concern with and interest in the lives of ordinary people..." (Hall, 1979:66). The preferred notion became that of the individual building up a correct perception of the external world through rigorous use of his own sense of organs. In this way, therefore, the world of the novel predominantly provided a vehicle to disseminate information relating to such perceptions of the external world by recreating images that were closest to real life.

Realism thus introduced a realisation that the Industrial Revolution has, via capitalism, also necessitated the introduction of new labour relations that became the root of social problems. Such labour relations, in turn, necessitated the distinction between producer and consumer, and alienated the product from the producer.

These new developments also had an impact on literary production arising from a need for the acquisition of a technology that was necessary for printing purposes. Alongside such a need the acquisition of human skills also became necessary for the existence of the publishing industry so that in the end the new social relations manifested themselves in literature.

In this way, a new mode of production namely, capitalism, changed the situation in such a way that literary activity effectively became another labour process alongside others. But most important, this development also effectively turned the novel (and other art forms) into a market commodity. Observes Eagleton (1976:59) in this

regard:

> Literature may be an artefact, a product of social consciousness, a world vision; but it is also an industry. Books are not just structures of meaning they are also commodities produced by publishers and sold on a market at a profit.

Subsequently, the market of the novel came to be largely associated with the middle class, which established itself throughout the production line from producer to consumer i.e. from author to reader. Eagleton paints this scenario more aptly in relation to drama. This scenario, one would argue, applies to the novel as well in this case. Says Eagleton (1976:59):

> Drama is not just a collection of literary texts; it is a capitalist business, which employs certain men [...] to produce a commodity to be consumed by an audience at a profit.

Eagleton does not, however, limit the marketing process just to casual consumers, i.e. casual readers. He extends it to serious consumers - the critics as well, thus introducing another dimension of production. This dimension is the reproduction of the means of production, which is designed to ensure the continued existence of capitalism. Says Eagleton (1976:59):

> Critics are not just analysts of texts; they are also (usually) academics hired by the state to prepare students ideologically for their functions within a capitalist society.

He insists also that writers are not just producers. Publishers who produce products that would sell (ibid.) also hire them. It is therefore not accidental that the literature industry, including other arts, but especially the novel, has tended to be a monopoly of the middle class.

Also, with the advent of realism and the emergence of capitalism, the role of the novel was not only seen as the 'mirror' of society, but also as a vehicle of expectations, disillusionment and aspirations of the middle class (cf. Peck and

Coyle, 1993:119). Authors then began to use the novel to identify and to address what they considered as specific social problems related to particular eras.

It is for this reason that sub-categories of the novel such as historical novels, socialist novels, biographical and autobiographical novels, including overtly political novels, emerged with time, depending on prevailing social conditions and historical circumstances. With such achievements, a firm foundation was laid for further developments of this genre in Europe, a trend that presumably also evolved elsewhere in the world.

Whether or not normative features of the novel were imported from Europe or whether following interaction, Africans developed novels with their own peculiar features, similar or different, is a matter that will be discussed next in this discourse, by focussing especially on the African novel. What can be said at this stage is that the change in the mode of production and the emergence of a class society seem to be uppermost factors accounting for the emergence of the African novel.

2.4 The African novel

The question of the African novel remains one of the most debated issues in literary scholarship. Without labouring on this question let it suffice to say the African novel is considered to be any novel that portrays Africans and has been written by Africans for Africans. This position does, however, extend the argument to a point of interrogating what is African about the African novel.

2.4.1 What is the African novel?

The African novel forms part of a larger body of African literature (or perhaps African literatures), which literary tradition is to date still besieged by the controversy of definition. Therefore what applies to African literature is considered to apply to the African novel as well. What is African literature? This question is often asked. A related question is also asked here: What is the African novel?

The legitimacy of such questions is unquestionable, for a situation has been created where African literature has to justify its existence in the face of the condescension

of Western imperialism. As Amenyonu (1991:vii) observes:

> For African Literature, the disclaimer was [...] rigid and no less vicious. Some Western scholars pointedly asserted that there could not be anything called African Literature that was autonomous and independent of Western Literature. Some that conceded independent existence to African Literature assigned the post-Second World War era as its date of emergence. For the generality of Western scholars, African Literature as an intellectual discipline was at best, an underdeveloped offshoot of European Literature and at worst, an unclassifiable Literature of former colonial people.

The most obvious flaw in this assumption, apart from the self-proclaimed maternity of African literature by European literature, is that it completely ignores African literatures in indigenous languages. It is, for instance, an indisputable fact that by the post-second World War era, some literatures in African languages, as will be indicated later, were already about half a century old.

However, the self-proclaimed maternity of African literature - `the infant', by the `maternal' European literature, remains a contentious issue because it suggests that the infant may never be independent or assume a peculiar character. It will and must always bear the characteristics of its mother. The problem, however, arises when the maternal European literature fails to accept the infant African literature into its own family. Such a situation would still be absurd, to say the least. But to disown African literature and yet claim maternity seems cynical. Emenyonu's (1991:vii) attempt to make sense out of this situation goes: "The Western scholars suggested that for proper welfare of the infant, it should through adoption be declared, an appendage to European Literature". Still, from this argument, the notions of adoption of and appendage of African literature as the stepson of European literature fail to make sense of this unfortunate situation, which nevertheless persists to exist.

MacEwan seems to provide a useful clue regarding the root of this problem by alluding to the African novel. Says McEwan (1983:5) in his half-hearted attempt to make sense out of this academic dilemma:

> Whereas drama and poetry are African, the novel is said to be a European import. However well adapted to Africa, fiction is seen as a latecomer there; this is occasionally made a justification for polemical novels, as though all the art had been already accomplished far away.

We have already pointed out that the novel was also a latecomer in European literary history. Therefore arguing from this premise does not even begin to address the problem. This tendency seems to persist in spite of the fact that even American literature, which in terms of language, culture and history is closest to European literature, denounces such appendage status. In an attempt to crystallise the tenacity of this issue, a distinction is even made between *American literature* and *literature written in America* (cf. Reed 1981:197).

On the contrary, in the case of Africa, there seems to be a compulsion to see what is supposed to be *African literature* as what is *like European literature*, nourished from Europe, not from Africa. If this kind of logic holds water, it would make a myth of a practice of grafting in Horticulture. In Horticulture, after grafting, the grafted tissue is nourished and supported by the host plant, not the original one. In a similar way it will make sense to believe that African literature is nourished from Africa, not Europe. For that matter "If and when the literature emerges, it will have to define its own laws for its unity; its own form" (Okigbo, quoted by Bishop, 1971:28). Therefore any view in literary development that ignores this truism is tantamount to myth making.

It is such myth making, as stated above, that unfortunately distorts facts about African literary development. One can only conclude, from these observations, that the problem surrounding African literature is more than just a literary one. It deals with a host of other issues around the West *versus* Africa relationship, collectively known as Western imperialism.

One would think, therefore, that to address the question of the 'Africanness' of African literature, one should start from a humble admission that: African literature has been so beset with problems that there seems to be no easy answer to the question regarding its very definition. Further the attempts to address this question

from the Africa-West dichotomy have only resulted in a vicious circle. Unfortunately for now, this seems to remain a starting point for any serious literary discourse.

It should, under normal circumstances, not be a problem to understand that African literature is that literature which is written by Africans about Africa for the African people. And further to concede that at the bottom of the problem of definition:

> [...] there is the unspecific use of the word 'African', as applied to our literature, and this manner of using the word has arisen from the historical factor which has linked literary activity with a wide range of literary and ideological expression (Irele, 1981:11).

This historical consideration thus defies narrow linguistic or ethnic considerations as the only norms in the definition of African literature as can be observed from Emenyonu's (1991:vii) remarks that:

> African Literature was [...] defined as "that body of Literature written in English or French, by Africans and non-Africans in which experiences originating in Africa was integral."

This view demonstrates cross-ethnic and cross-racial considerations that characterise African literature and African existence. However, the fact that the Western mind purports that not all literatures written by Africans are classified as African literature. Specifically, the tendency seems to imply that most literatures written by indigenous Africans in indigenous languages are excluded from this definition.

Consequently, to qualify African literature exclusively in terms of European languages as African and to ignore African literature in indigenous languages is not only perverse but is deceptive as well. Such deception regarding the definition of African literature, including the novel, has consequently turned African literature into an ever-contentious subject. Given the seriousness of this question, it becomes evident that the problem of definition would require a study on its own and as such this subject could not be adequately addressed within the context of this discourse.

It should, therefore, be appreciated that it is the essence of this confusing scenario that lays the basis for an assertion that a better understanding of African literature should be acquired. That is why Irele (1981:29) remarks as follows in a related argument about the criticism of African literature:

> The issue here, then, is to define the function of criticism in relation to what amounts to the extraordinary situation of modern African literature, to see in what sense a specific critical approach can help not only in rendering a true account of its nature and relevance, within the context of the contemporary African situation.

Perhaps one of the steps towards addressing this problem would be to address the problem of language, which by its nature has bearing on the target audience. This could be done by firstly specifying the various literatures in terms of each of the languages spoken in Africa. For instance, Sesotho literature, Yoruba literature, isiXhosa literature, etc. including African English, French and Portuguese literatures. After all many Africans have written profusely in English and other European languages, which would also make it disastrous to discard the wealth of literary traditions in non-African languages. Says Achebe:

> What all this suggests [...] is that you cannot cram African literature into a small, neat definition. I do not see African literature as one unit but as a group of associated units - in fact the sum total of all the national and ethnic literatures of Africa (quoted by Bishop, 1971:33).

This assertion should however not be viewed as a means of justifying the use of European languages as the only *de jure* modes of expression for African literature, as Wali argues:

> [...] the whole uncritical acceptance of English and French as the inevitable medium for educated African writing, is misdirected, and has no chance of advancing African literature and culture. In other words, until these [African] writers and their western midwives accept the fact that any true African literature must be written in African languages, they would be merely

> pursuing a dead end, which can only lead to sterility, uncreativity, and frustration (quoted by Bishop, 1971:53).

Wali's claims are based on the argument that literatures are, in the first place, defined by language. To illustrate this position he argues further that, "The basic distinction between French and German literature for instance, is that one is written in French and the other in German" (ibid.).

It can therefore be considered ideal, without ignoring Wali's assertion, that an all inclusive approach in terms of language might in the interim minimise the tension created around the demands made by Wali and Ngugi wa Thiong'o, among others. The two insist that African literature must be written only in indigenous languages, *vis-à-vis* Emenyonu's and Irele's definitions of African literature. This proposal seems to be in line with Irele's (1981:45) somewhat queer assertion that:

> ...there is no indigenous literature at the moment that we can call 'African' in a wide continental sense, and in the modern perspective of our modern existence. What we have is a diversity of literatures expressed in various languages native to Africa, and each one bound to the specific peoples and cultures using those languages.

Irele with his non-continental dimension of indigenous literatures seems to fail to appreciate the fact that linguistically there can be no monolithic definition of African literature, which limits it to a specific language or ideology. In fact, African literature comprises a diversity of languages and ideologies, which collectively give it peculiar features - features that are peculiar to Africa.

The second step would then be to classify all such literatures in different languages and reflecting different ideological leanings and thematic tendencies under a larger body of African literatures. However, minimum requirements for what qualifies as African literature, regardless of the mode of expression, should be observed. African literature must articulate the African experience, based on Africa's own history. Or to use Ngara's (1982:3) definition; African literature must be "a creative writing in which an African setting is authentically handled or to which experiences originating in

Africa are integral". It must also be an experience that is consistent with Onochie's observation that:

> Most African countries shared the common historical experience of colonialism and neo-colonialism with the by-products of balkanisation, capitalist economy and colonial education and religion (cf. Emenyonu, 1991:83).

Considering such a proposition as a norm, then, the initial response to the question as to what constitutes the African novel would be that: As a literary form, the African novel is qualified by the general features of this genre but still remains unique to the African situation. It should also be realised that in creating the novel, the African novelist is surrounded by a host of other factors. For instance;

> Influences from his own culture in forms of narrative, in oral culture, in his own language will assist in his creation of an African reality, but 'influences' in good literature are only one kind of inspiration (McEwan, 1983:2).

Consequently, the African novel does not, in this way, only stand outside the European tradition "not only by its reference, but also [...] by the way the language and the form are handled" (Irele, 1981:33). It also emerges as an independent literary tradition.

Moreover, the extent of the alleged influence of the European novel on the African novel can only be assumed but not quantified. This is largely because influence can only be mutual: That is, the European novel influencing the African novel and *vice versa*. In case this does not happen, one would rather safely speak about imposition or to be exact, cultural imperialism.

The question of influence becomes even more suspect if one considers the essence of realism as the progenitor of the novel. As argued earlier, the novel, in effect, arose out of a desire to portray life 'as it is'. This therefore presupposes that the setting, events, themes and characters portrayed in a novel would be the ones the author is familiar with. And an African author is undoubtedly familiar with circumstances prevailing in Africa. Thus the setting, events, characters and themes

that are portrayed in the African novel would logically be peculiarly African.

Therefore without pursuing the question of the assumed influence any further, the African novel should, like any other novel, also be considered as an artistic attempt to portray (African) life 'as it is'. However, as art it should not be perceived as the actual documentation of African life, but "a portable mirror which can be conveyed everywhere and is not convenient for reflecting all aspects of life and nature" (Ofor, in Emenyonu, 1991:23). Such a consideration then makes the need to establish the place and role of the novel in African society even more pressing.

One of the ways of effectively addressing such a need would be, to recognise that the African novel also arose with the rise of a class (cf. Craig, 1975:160), in an emerging capitalist society. It is, therefore, in instances such as the rise of a class and the emergence of capitalism, that the African novel acquired peculiar features, something that has thus far tended to be ignored.

It should therefore be noted that, in the African instance, the rise of a class society[2] and the emergence of capitalism did not come about as a result of internal developmental social phenomena. They came about as a result of external intervention into the lives of the African people, which intervention was wrought by the advent of the forces of colonialism and sustained by Western imperialism. In fact, "Colonialism interrupted the course of many relatively homogenous societies at various stages of their own historical developments..." (McEwan, 1983:7).

The impact of such interruption has subsequently been reworked into and reflected in the very development of literature. Thus the African novel invariably portrays both implicitly and explicitly, the African experience of the colonial legacy. Observes Ngara (1985:30) in this regard: "The African novel not only arose with the emergence of a class, but also at a time of violent social change".

Ngara, however, ascribes the violent situation to the agitation for independence, not

---

[2] African societies, like most underdeveloped communities, tended to have caste hierarchical structures as opposed to class differentiated social structures.

the earlier situation of the process of colonisation. Regarding the latter part of his observation, one would argue that this situation holds mainly for the sub-Saharan African states to the north of our borders, where there was, around the middle of the twentieth century, already open conflict initiated by the spirit of *uhuru*.

These are the African states in which the emerging class of authors, some of whom were involved in or supported nationalist movements, mainly chose to write their novels in languages of the colonisers rather than indigenous African languages. In fact this emerging class, as Ngara observes, "was the African intelligentsia, the product of colonial missionary education" (ibid. p.30).

Such intellectuals, while they might have been influenced, in some way, by the European culture, largely maintained a different ideological position. It is therefore not surprising that even those who consider African literature as literature written by Africans in European languages (cf. Simonse, 1982:451), mostly articulated the African world view. Nonetheless, such a definition still paints a one-sided picture of the actual developments of literature in Africa.

It would, therefore, be appreciated to note that writing in European languages served a latent function of facilitating communication among different African nationalities that were trapped in similar situations. However, notwithstanding such an advantage, an approach to the definition of African literature, which focuses exclusively on the European mode of expression, is shortsighted. Moreover, as already argued, it precariously distorts the development of African literature by ignoring literatures in indigenous languages.

Without pursuing this argument any further, it needs to be stressed that it was a cardinal mistake that certain literary traditions in African literary development have been downplayed. Essentially, such marginalised literatures in indigenous languages also form a significant component of Africa's literary history, and deserve decent treatment (cf. Gérard 1993:16). Moreover, such marginalised literatures, as will be indicated later, also carry valuable accounts of the process of literary development, especially in Southern Africa.

While African authors and scholars to the north of the continent were beginning to grapple with the question of what constitutes African literature, around 1956 (see Bishop 1971:27), significant progress had already been made in Southern Africa in the direction of creative writing. This progress applies in particular to the Sesotho novel in this study, as well as novels in other indigenous languages.

As early as 1866 an isiXhosa translation of Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, entitled *Uhambo lo mhambi*, was done by Tiyo Soga. Rev. A. Mabille's translation of Bunyan's book appeared in 1872 in Sesotho under the title *Leeto la Mokreste* (cf. also Tekateka, 1967:4). J.W Colenso's translation of the same book into isiZulu under the title *Ukuhamba Kwesihambi* appeared in 1883, while R. Moffat's Setswana translation *Loeto lwa ga Mokeresete* appeared in 1909. The latecomers in these early developments are E.D. Giesseke's Tshivenda translation, *Lwenda la Muendi* (1960) and J.L. Rammala's Sepedi version *Leeto la Mokriste* (1966) (cf. Ntuli & Swanepoel, 1993:20-1).

Bunyan's book also allegedly inspired the great Sesotho novelist, Thomas Mofolo, to write his first novel, *Moeti oa Bochabela*, which was published in 1907 (Maphike, in Gérard 1993:97). However, Larson (1972:3) gives a different version regarding Mofolo's *Moeti oa Bochabela*. He says:

> In 1906, the South African, Thomas Mofolo, had written a novel in his native language, Sesuto, which was later translated into English under the title, *The Traveller of the East* and published in London by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (1934).

Larson, on the one hand, does not make any reference to Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, either as a possible source or an inspiration to Mofolo's novel. According to Maphike (see Gérard, 1993:97), Newbolt and Dutton also debate the role of *The Pilgrim's Progress* in the conception of Mofolo's *Moeti oa Bochabela*. Newbolt considers the former as an inspiration, while Dutton sees the latter as "a new product" (ibid.).

On the other hand, Tekateka is also hesitant to regard Bunyan's book as the actual

source of influence to Mofolo's *Moeti oa Bochabela* because he recognises major differences between the two books. According to Tekateka, "The kind of influence Mofolo derived from John Bunyan cannot be manifested in likeness, but in common seriousness of concern with essential human issues" (p.13). Hence he concludes that:

> The only major point of similarity between these books is that they both delineate life as a journey beset with pitfalls, dangers and despair to the next world. But they differ in their manner of execution. Bunyan sees to it that in addition to company, relief and joy Christians should be given hope and encouragement. Thomas Mofolo makes his hero trudge the arduous journey alone, in loneliness and fear as well as despair (p.12).

Also as regards the actual date of the publication of Mofolo's *Moeti oa Bochabela*, Tekateka claims that; "In 1906 the *Leselinyana* began to publish in a serial form his first book `*Moeti wa Botjhabela*'" (The Traveller of the East) (p.9). He considers the same date also as the one in which *Moeti oa Bochabela* was published. He says: "*Moeti wa Botjhabela* is the first of the three books Thomas Mofolo wrote and it was published in 1908" (p.10).

However, without making these contradictory publication dates an issue at this stage, it should be conceded that these early developments had laid a basis for further development of the African novel in various African languages spoken in Southern Africa. A corpus of novels had, as a consequence, emerged in subsequent years, in various African languages in Southern Africa.

The important observation that emanates from such developments relates to the assumed inspiration or influence of the African novel by the European novel. South African scholars such as Moloi (1973), Msimang (1983) and Sirayi (1989), view the inspiration of the African novel as (partly) coming from folklore traditions such as praise songs, fables and legends. Ngara (1985:31), argues from a different perspective that:

> [African] authors not only used the novel, which was the dominant popular

> form of bourgeois world into which Africa had been hurled by history, **but also utilised the genre which was most popular in their tradition, i.e. the legend** (my emphasis).

Evidently, unlike Ngara, Moloi, Msimang and Sirayi's arguments do not probe modes of production. Their arguments nevertheless make an important contribution to the effect that the African novel drew its inspiration from the narrative culture of African folklore. Had they probed modes of production, they could have also realised a contrast between the circumstances of the portrayal of the hero in the legend or praise song, and the circumstances of the portrayal of a hero in the African novel, something to which Moloi (1973:34-35) merely infers.

Furthermore, such a realisation could have possibly demonstrated a fundamental contrast in the portrayal of the hero between the European novel and the African novel. As Ogude (in Emenyonu, 1991:8) observes:

> **In most European fiction, even at its very beginning, the fate of the individual is the primary concern of the novelist**; it may be and generally presented against a recognisable background, but it is nonetheless the fortune of the individual that interests us. **In African literature, especially the African novel, the reality of history dictates the novelist handling of his material with the consequent result that the group rather than the individual are the object of the novelist's attention** (my emphasis).

These observations demonstrate a significant perceptual difference of the portrayal of the hero between the African novel and the European novel. Therefore, to stick purely to perceptions that the first African novels were either purely translations of or were merely inspired by European writings, can only cloud the question of the impact a change in modes of production, as a condition for the emergence of this genre. Further that the significance of the hero in the European novel is different from that of a hero in the African novel. It is therefore important to emphasise that:

> ... modern African literature presents itself both as a challenge to the pervasive spirit of imperialism of the West and as a mode of a creative

process of self-differentiation (Irele, 1981:2).

From the preceding arguments it becomes evident that, apart from being a literary genre, the study of the African novel should be placed within the context of socio-historical developments. It needs also to probe issues that have conditioned both its emergence and existence. Moving in this direction will also demonstrate the effect of the mode of African social existence on the African novel. Observes Amuta (1989:125) in this regard that:

> ...the general framework within which explorations into the identity of the African novel should be pursued is the whole matter of literary development, its modes and pattems as these are inexorably conditioned by socio-historical developments.

Such socio-historical developments relating to the rise of the African novel point also to the rise of class society and the emergence of the capitalist economy as necessary conditions for the emergence of this genre. One would therefore argue that it is the capitalist mode of production and the subsequent rise of a class, more than just the European novel, that have contributed to the rise of the African novel. As Simonse (1982:455) observes:

> ...confrontation between the capitalist and the pre-capitalist modes of production constitutes the rock bottom that the African writer's creative imagination cannot help but touch when giving a literary shape to his vision of society.

There is therefore a need, in the study of the African novel, to adopt a critical approach, especially the theory of production, which would enable the critic to bring to the surface all the elements that have conditioned the African novel and contributed to its peculiar characteristic features.

2.4.2 A critique of the African novel

From the above subsection it should be clear that it is not the intention of this study to give undue prominence, without overlooking the effects of colonialism, to the

question of the influence of the European novel on the African novel. Moreover, influence, unlike intertextuality, lacks the capacity to adequately explain any literary process. This notion will also not be able to assist in putting the critique of the African novel in perspective because influence is generally assumed and can rarely be proved.

This view is adopted especially because the alleged 'influence' is also considered, in this study, as a mere by-product of a larger process of Western cultural imperialism wrought by the colonisation of Africa, and not as a process in its own right. Colonialism is in turn an aspect of Western capitalism. In fact, "colonial political control has for a long time been an absolute condition for the expansion of the capitalist mode of production" (Simonse, 1989:457).

Furthermore, giving undue prominence to the notion of influence, while ignoring the effect of change in modes of production, might again lead criticism to what Eagleton (1984:39) describes as "a locus of political contention rather than a terrain of cultural consensus". According to Eagleton this is a situation where criticism exhibits power relations in such a way that the hegemony of the powerful social classes predominate cultural practice at the expense of subordinate classes and their cultures. This situation tends to prevail in spite of the fact that:

> ... a common ideational characteristic of the African novel to date is that it is an artistic negation of a series of political negations, not necessarily a complacent affirmation of the "moving spirit" of a dominant class (Amuta, 1989:128).

It is, therefore, considered ideal to adopt an approach which is closest to what Eagleton (1984) terms the 'sage', which sage is "an attempt to rescue criticism and literature from the squalid political infighting [...] constituting them instead as transcendental forms of knowledge" (ibid. p.39). This can hopefully be successfully done by redirecting criticism to production - the basis of human life, thus making it "criticism of life"; to use Arnold's (quoted by Eagleton, 1984:41) expression.

This attitude is adopted in this study with full cognisance of Stallknecht's (in Larson

1972:x) assertion that:

> The emergence of an African fiction, which responds to European influence and interprets its own world in European terms, is a cultural event of prime importance.

Stallknecht seems to suggest here that African fiction, as a norm, responds to European influence and uses European eyes for its interpretation. Such a tendency has been known for its attempt to legitimise the dependence of African fiction on European criticism by appropriating African literature to European aesthetics.

Interpreting African literature in European terms could perhaps be of interest elsewhere, for instance where literature is perceived as speaking *universally*, not *idiomatically*. In this study such an approach is irrelevant because literature is considered to be speaking to a *people*, not to some *anonymous audience* (cf. Eagleton, 1984:43). This implies that African literature is considered, in the first place, to be speaking to the African people, through an African idiom because it is a literature of a particular people - the African people.

This being the situation, it would be naive to argue that Africans had, by design, to depend on the 'generosity' of Europe to develop fiction for them. Conditions, which are ideal for the writing of fiction, are, anyway, primary determinants in facilitating the development of fiction; a new mode of production resulting into new social relations has, first of all, to take root. Such social relations have not been established by literary influence, but were a result of a change in the mode of production.

It should be noted that social relations in Africa, without denouncing generic factors, are not a carbon copy of social relations in Europe. The fact that Africa was colonised does not mean that the African cultural identity and history were completely obliterated and replaced with the European. Europe merely added another dimension in African history, namely, Western imperialism with all its ramifications. African history and culture had, in spite of European intrusion, continued to survive and to produce its literature. As Ngara (1982:8) argues:

> Just because Africa was colonised and influenced by Europe, African culture should not be taken as part of European culture. There is a basic similarity underlying all literature of all nations, but cultural, historical, political and linguistic issues give rise to national differences. These are therefore factors, which make African literature different from European, Latin American or Japanese literature. African literature springs from African social and historical conditions.

In the same vein, alluding to such a perception of development, Achebe remarks that; "modern Africa did not begin at the time of British protectorates [...], a highly developed civilisation had existed [...] generations ago" (quoted by McEwan, 1983:31), i.e. long before colonial occupation. This implies that Africa was never static and therefore the African novel would have developed any way, with social developments in Africa permitting.

It would be equally naive, however, to argue that colonialism did not interfere in the development of African literature in general, and the African novel in particular. In fact, "Colonialist education was a factor in Africa's literary development, especially the case of the novel" (Amuta, 1989:126). Such interference can be adequately understood against the historical background of the Western capitalist mode of production. This study therefore, also concedes that:

> Literature is at one and the same time History's major bequest to mankind and the principal corrective of history. This is because all literature begins as an experience and ends as fiction. Accordingly without experience, [...] there would be no literature (Okam, in Emenyonu, 1991:55).

The history of colonial occupation thus forms an important aspect of African literary history. Consequently, the African novel should also be seen as a "product of history from the point of view of its dependence on history for its constituent elements" but also as "part of making and remaking history" (Bamikunle, in Emenyonu, 1991:81). Thus literature as a product of history would portray the people's reaction to their own history by showing a desire to preserve or to change it (history). This can be seen in various literary movements associated with African literature such as

Negritude, Realism, Surrealism and Pan-Africanism (cf. Irele 1981 and Bishop 1971). Hence argues Ngara (1985:31-32) in illustrating such vicissitudes in literary development with regard to the African novelist:

> [The] same mission-educated intellectuals, who were at one time so effectively colonised that they worshipped at the altar of colonial languages and culture, and despised their own way of life, were also destined to be the champions of intellectual decolonisation at the time of Africa's re-awakening from the deep sleep of colonial domination.

From the above observations, it should be granted that like all societies that make their histories, Africa also makes her own history, but makes it differently. In a similar manner, all nations experience the world but experience it differently. Africans, for instance, experienced Africa as colonised nations while Europeans experienced Africa as colonising nations. And these are completely disparate experiences resulting into distinct albeit related histories.

In this way, Africans should not be conceived to have experienced the world the same way the Europeans did. Hence, if there should be similarities between the European and the African novel, such factors should not merely be seen as a consequence of the influence of European literary models designed for African literature. In fact,

> ...within the African social reality, the tensions are more numerous, many faceted - and also much confusing - than could be represented by simple schemas on which [...] the European novel is based (Simonse, 1982:458).

These tensions stem from the underlying tendency of European domination, enshrined in social power relations. Such social relations therefore form an important point of focus in the critique of the African novel because they are responsible for its specific features. Therefore, "Given this fact of specificity, it would be the height of academic oversight to deny the African novel its distinctive historical specificity" (Amuta, 1989:127).

Consequently, any similarities that might exist between the African novel and the

European novel would not be adequately accounted for if viewed purely as literary phenomena. Such literary phenomena should at best be seen merely as "pretexts for narrative elaboration and rationales for narrative choices" (Reed, 1981:230). The underlying factor should, instead, remain that changes in modes of production, together with the resultant social power relations, account primarily for the rise of similar or different literary genres. As Ngara (1985:36) observes:

> It would be quite wrong to advance a theory of literary development, which does not take into account the role of productive forces and the level of material production. The introduction of capitalism by the colonial powers brought about a technological transformation of the continent and this had a bearing on literary production.

While this assertion may be accepted as a position, the danger of insisting on influence should not be underestimated. Such a tendency has, on a lighter note, persistently denigrated the creativity of the African literary genius. On a more serious note, such a tendency has brutally suppressed the truth about African literary history.

In effect, the results of insisting on influence have only made it convenient to adopt critical methods that would slot African literary genres into ready-made European aesthetic models, in which African literature has successfully failed. This failure demonstrates the short sightedness of such an approach, which perceives the influence of the European novel, against all evidence to the contrary, as the primary progenitor of the African novel. In fact, Ngara (1985:37) argues that:

> ... the African novel is not only the product of a class - the intelligentsia - but also a result of historical conditions. Modern African literature should not be seen in isolation from the prevailing economic and socio-political conditions and from the dominant ideologies of the world in which it is produced.

It can therefore be argued further that, if conditions for the production of the novel precede the production of the novel; one would then insist that, it is a change in the mode of production, not the European novel as such, which has primarily given rise

to the African novel. Influence is of secondary importance, if ever it is to be considered. Observes Eagleton (1976:61) in this regard:

> ...art, like any form of production, depends upon certain techniques of production [...] These techniques are part of the productive forces of art, the stage of development of artistic production; and they involve a set of social relations between the artistic producer and his audience.

This means that before the African novel could be conceived, conditions necessary for the production of such a genre had to be created: literacy skills, capital, affluent environment, etc. And such conditions, which are a *sine qua non* for the production of a novel, can only be consistent with the capitalist mode of production. As Eagleton (1978:49) observes:

> Literary production and consumption presuppose certain levels of literacy, physical and mental well being, and leisure and material affluence: the material conditions for writing and reading include economic resources, shelter, lighting and privacy.

This means that, as a dominant social formation, capitalism, had first of all, to precede the writing of the novel by creating certain conditions of production and also reproducing the conditions of production (cf. Althusser, 1984:1). Such conditions would ensure the emergence of a novel by, for instance, producing a class of people who could write i.e. producers, as well as a class of people who could read i.e. consumers. Such consumers needed further to be employed in the labour market so they could earn income, which would enable them to purchase books.

Missionaries, in the case of African literatures in Southern Africa, were necessarily responsible for the setting up of such an infrastructure. As Tekateka (1967:5) observes with regard to Sesotho literature:

> It was under the guidance of and inspiration of these Christian Missionaries that the Basotho authors emerged. [...] All the old Basotho writers were educated at Morija. They were trained as teachers in the training school, and as evangelists in the Bible school. Almost all worked at the Printing Press

and Book Depot at Morija. Some even taught in both training and Bible schools.

It is evident from the above quote that in the process of acquiring necessary skills, the reproduction of capitalist conditions of production was also achieved, the re-production of a labour force, employers, industry, consumers, etc. The schools, both training and Bible schools were in the above case vital institutions for the acquisition of skills, thus introducing the Basotho to capitalism. This means further that in the process of producing the capitalist conditions of production, people then enter into certain dichotomous social relationships e.g. employer- employee, producer-consumer, rich-poor, etc.

Ultimately this whole process then presents a new reality in a form of a system of beliefs, a new consciousness known as *ideology* (cf. Althusser, 1984:7). Then the new ideology, so acquired, comes to resemble the way, in which people live or are supposed to live according to certain social relationships. This can best be understood through the manner in which the *infrastructure* (economic base or the unity of productive forces and relations of production) and the *superstructure* (law and the State and ideologies - religious, ethical, legal, political, etc.) function (ibid. p.8).

Law and the State, on the one hand, represent what Althusser (1984:16-17) terms *Repressive State Apparatus* (RSA), i.e. the government, the administration, the courts, the prisons, etc. Social formations, on the other hand, represent what he terms *Ideological State Apparatuses* (ISAs), i.e. the religious ISA, the educational ISA, the political ISA, etc. In explaining the relationship between the RSA and the ISAs, Althusser (1984:19) says:

> ... the (Repressive) State Apparatus functions massively and predominantly by repression (including physical repression), while functioning secondarily by ideology. [...] for their part the Ideological State Apparatuses function massively and predominantly by ideology, but they also function secondarily by repression, even if ultimately, but only ultimately, this is very attenuated and concealed, even symbolic.

This implies that the functioning of these two layers of society, the RSAs and the ISAs is not mutually exclusive. The public domain of the RSAs might interfere in the private domain of the ISAs, and *vice versa*. And such interference can be manifested in various ways, especially in the cultural ISA of which literature is part. This normally happens when publication acts are passed by parliament to regulate the media.

It can therefore be argued at this point that, as a literary product, the African novel also "crystallises modes of ideological perception; but it also embodies a certain set of productive relations [...]" (Eagleton, 1976:67). These are some of the important aspects on which, in the critique of the African novel, this study will focus.

Arguing from a different perspective, Deist (1994:156) seems to capture these points of focus succinctly, when he asserts that:

> From a cultural anthropological perspective literary products have social functions in a society and should be studied in relation to the various elements making up the relevant social system.

Such considerations are also important because, the novel is basically a product of a process of labour and according to Marxism:

> Labour is; in the first place, a process in which both man and Nature participate, and in which man of his own accord starts, regulates, and controls the material reactions between him and nature. [...] By thus acting on the external world and changing it, he at the same time changes his nature (cf. Fischer, 1970:33).

From this assertion one would deduce that the African novel, as an artistic product, has also been produced under the regulations that would change in order to promote capitalism. Therefore all the agencies involved in its production should have undergone a change that would be consistent with the capitalist mode of production.

All these factors mean that the ideology of capitalism, as the economic mode of production, would also constitute a dominant ideology in the production of the African novel. This ideology can, however, be re-inforced by other social formations or ISAs, such as the educational ISA and the religious ISA, for instance, which ISAs would also be consistent with the ideals of capitalism.

The pursuance of the ideology of capitalism will then transform all agencies involved in the production process into commodities, where certain market values can be attached to them. Subsequently, labour also becomes a commodity that can be sold on a market place for a profit and to yield a wage or salary that would legitimise capitalism. However, this seemingly lucrative (literary) industry is with negative consequences:

> Production does not only produce man as a commodity, the human commodity, man in the form of a commodity; in conformity with this situation it produces him as a mentally and physically dehumanised being [...] (cf. Fischer, 1970:52).

In the case of literary production this means that authors, reviewer, publishers, readers and teachers tend to lose their human value within related stages of production. In other words, human participants are finally valuable, not as human beings, but as market commodities. That is, they are ultimately valuable in so far as they make the novel marketable by jointly producing novel commodities that can sell, not commodities which authors want to produce. The industry therefore, in turn, necessitates the establishment of institutions of gatekeepers such as review committees, language boards and publication boards. Such institutions control, through media policies and publication acts, the quality, acceptability and the flow of literary products. However, in the process:

> The worker becomes an ever-cheaper commodity the more goods he creates. The devaluation of the human world increases in direct relation with the increase in value of the world of things (ibid. p.52).

Such considerations and related issues are considered to have influenced, in

various ways, the content and the style of the African novel. Hence the production process forms the important basis of the criticism of this genre.

In this study, the process of criticism will, therefore, be informed by a consideration of the interplay between the RSA and ISAs, reflected in various novels, and their socio-historical implications. This means a consideration of the functional aspects of the novel e.g. milieu, theme, characterisation, etc. mediated by a consideration of the interplay between the RSAs and the ISAs, against historical considerations. Such considerations are expected to reveal, in the final analysis, the existing social contradictions because:

> The division of labour, the growth of productive forces, the association of production and private appropriation give rise, of necessity, to social contradictions (Fischer, 1970:81).

Such social contradictions, as part of lived experience, manifest themselves in literature because "The novel is seen as a literary form in which fundamental social contradictions are reflected" (Simonse, 1982:455).

These observations then bring us to the hypothesis of this study which is: **The Sesotho novel, as a form of literary production, should, via theories of production, reveal the dominant mode of production and how it is supported by and/or is in conflict with other social formations**. In this way, one would be in a position to explain why in the portrayal of society Sesotho novelists make specific selections and distortions (cf. Werlin, 1990:12).

2.5 Conclusion

The foregoing discussion has, among others, demonstrated the possible metamorphosic process of the development of the novel against the imposed development. That is, it considered factors that determined and guided such developments, as well as arguments relating to the questions of origin and influence of the African novel. A few observations are of significance here.

Firstly, it has been demonstrated that there is a central position from which the origin

of the novel can possibly be traced, namely, the European novel. Secondly, it has been illustrated that there has been a change in the mode of production and a continuous change in social processes, including literary movements that account for the rise of different genres or different types of the same genre.

Lastly, it has been argued that, the fact that the novel firstly emerged in Europe does not necessarily make the European novel a progenitor and a model for all similar genres in other nations, especially in Africa. Similar or related circumstances may be considered to be some of the factors, to explain either similarities or differences in a particular genre. McLuhan, for instance, points out the effects of modern technology as one of such factors. He says that:

> One of the advantages of considering the effects produced by printing is that we can come to terms with the coexistence of incompatible views and the persistence of contradictory movements without treating any as anomalous and without forcing them into simplistic grand designs. The many changes introduced by this new technology, [...] far from synchronising smoothly or pointing in one direction, contributed to disjunction, worked at cross purposes, and operated out of phase with each other (quoted by Reed, 1981:26).

In the same vein, Klaus (1982:2) argues that the novel is genetically linked to the rise and history of the middle class in Europe. This does not, however, mean that it should remain "once and for all a thoroughly bourgeois genre pervaded by a liberal ideology which it can never hope to expunge".

The assumptions made in this chapter, in relation to the novel, will now be pursued in greater detail with particular reference to the development of the Sesotho novel.

CHAPTER 3

A SURVEY OF THE MATERIAL CONDITIONS THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE RISE OF THE SESOTHO NOVEL

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter focused on the historical developments of the novel in general, but especially with regard to prevailing material conditions resulting from existing general modes of production. The results yielded by this investigation, though useful, might not necessarily answer the specific questions relating to the African novel. The previous chapter has partly demonstrated that the African novel has developed under circumstances peculiar to itself, different from those of the English novel. One of the informing factors in the development of the African novel is the oral tradition. Hence says Kane, an advocate of the notion of continuity in African literary study:

> the originality of the African novel must be found more specifically in its relationship to forms of oral literature ... Greater attention to the relationships, to the links of continuity between oral and written literatures would allow one to better understand the problem of the African novel (quoted by Julien, 1992:5).

The argument, which is specific to the development of the African novel, is therefore necessary to provide a framework for a better understanding of the development of this genre. Such a framework would constitute a frame of reference from which the development of the African novel in general, and the Sesotho novel in particular could be explored. It is on account of a similar motivation that Amuta (1989:125) argues that:

> ...the general framework within which explorations into the identity of the African novel should be pursued is the whole matter of literary development, its modes and patterns as these are inexorably conditioned by socio-historical development.

Subsequently, this chapter is intended to survey the material conditions *per se* as they unfolded, in socio-historical development of the Basotho nation. The survey will be used to illustrate the impact such material conditions have had on the development of the Sesotho novel. Such a survey will include, in the first instance, possible background provided by the oral tradition which Swanepoel (1989:124) refers to as "a fountain head of the written tradition".

Such an approach will make it possible to demonstrate that changes in general modes of production, which led to the founding of printing, also underline the development of the Sesotho novel. The argument supporting this view, which has necessitated this line of approach stems from the realisation that:

> The novel is [...] a new art. [...] But the novel as an art in its own right, with its own rules, with its universal acceptance and appreciation, is a creature of our own civilisation, a creature, above all, of the printing press (Fox, 1979:19).

The pursuance of this argument will therefore include the impact literacy has had on the cultural fabric and the world-view of the Basotho society. This argument will specifically focus on the role played by the missionaries of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (PEMS), as well as the role played by European occupation of the sub-continent.

It should be appreciated that literacy, coupled with the technology of printing, effectively changed the aesthetic appreciation and the format of literary art. Says Ngara (1985:36-37) in this regard:

> The availability of the printing press and the printed word was a contributing factor in the development of modern African literature. Whereas the illiterate society of Africa's communal and feudal past relied on the storyteller for moral instruction and on the fable and the song for aesthetic pleasure, the emerging bourgeois society could now capitalise on new means of artistic production and their ability to read and write.

By implication an approach to literary production, while considering the development of the Sesotho novel *per se*, will also investigate the link between literature and

societal development. Such a link is important for various reasons, but only two will be pursued here:

- to outline societal changes that have made the development of Sesotho literature and the Sesotho novel possible
- to illustrate the cultural residue that has facilitated such literary development.

These factors will be investigated in terms of changes in the modes of production as well as the impact of literacy. Even though a distinction could be made between changes in the modes of production and literacy, an attempt will not be made to discuss these issues separately. This will, however, be done in a manner that will highlight the impact of each regarding their social function. Subsequently we shall focus on the orality-literacy interface as another important offshoot in the development of modern Sesotho literature in general and the novel in particular.

3.2 Changes in modes of production and the attendant material conditions as factors in the emergence and the development of modern Sesotho literature

It is by now common knowledge in African literary study that the early development of modern Sesotho literature is attributed to the arrival of the missionaries of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (PEMS). These missionaries arrived in Lesotho and settled at Morija in 1833 (cf. Swanepoel, 1987:95; as well as Ntuli & Swanepoel, 1993:19). The advent of the missionaries is also associated with the introduction of Christianity and literacy among the Basotho.

It needs to be understood, however, that this was not their sole mission. They were also part of the colonial conspiracy to conquer Africa and other parts of the Third World. As explained in the previous chapter, the missionaries also introduced capitalism, which was the lifeblood of the Western way of life. This means that, capitalism in this study is not merely understood as just an economic aspect of social life, which operates alongside other social formations. It is understood as a social system which determines the entire way of life of society because, "The mode

of production of the material means of existence conditions the whole process of social, political and intellectual life" (cf. Fox, 1979:28).

In this way not only were the objectives of capitalism reflected in the religious and the educational aspects of the new Western way of life, or civilisation as it is often called. Religion and education became instruments, among others, through which the ideology of capitalism as a mode of production was promoted among the colonised people of Africa.

Literary study seems better placed to explore the effects of these changes, which have not brought only South Africa, but the whole of Africa, to the brink of cultural, political, economical and national suicide. Says Ngugi, viewing the role of literature and the writer, in this regard:

> Literature is, of course, primarily concerned with what any political and economic arrangement does to the spirit and values governing human relationship. Nobody who has passed through the major cities of Europe and America, where Capitalism is in full bloom, can ever wish the same fate on Africa as far as human relationships are concerned ... It is the height of irony that we, who have suffered most from exploitation, but exacerbates destructive rivalries between brothers and sisters, a system that thrives on the survival instincts of dwellers in a Darwinian jungle. The writer cannot be exempted from the task of exposing the distorted values governing such a jungle precisely because this distorts healthy human relationships (quoted by Killam, 1980:6).

Ngugi argues further that in such a situation, the novels become a creative manifestation of this exploitation of beliefs. This argument therefore explains the need to explore social conditions, which the missionaries introduced from the time they arrived in Lesotho. The following discussion will, as a result, demonstrate how the process of capitalist colonisation unfolded, especially in so far as Christianity and literacy affected the development of Sesotho literature. Further the impact such developments brought to bear on the cultural life and systems of beliefs of the Basotho.

3.3 Perspectives on the early literacy period among the Basotho

In the process of introducing literacy among the Basotho, the missionaries also provided the infrastructure (physical and social) for the development of Sesotho literature. Through various means the missionaries also guided and nurtured such developments (cf. Tekateka, 1967; Moloi, 1973; Gildenhuys, 1973; Swanepoel, 1976; etc.). At the forefront of all these developments was Christianity, which Ngugi views as part and parcel of cultural imperialism. Says Ngugi:

> Christianity, in the past, has been used to rationalize imperialist domination and exploitation of peasants and workers. It has been used to blind people to the reality of their exploitation because Christianity as a whole wants to tell the people that their lot is God-given, as opposed to man-conditioned. So, you see, if you are poor because God has willed it, you are more than likely to continue to pray to God to right your conditions. But if you know that your poverty is not God-conditioned, but is socially conditioned, then you are likely to do something about those social conditions that are assuring that you are poor (quoted by Killam, 1980:9).

Consequently, the role of missionaries and their will not be limited to literacy and literature. Their role in conditioning socio-historical developments and world-views of the Basotho will also be investigated. A consideration of such developments will demonstrate how it became inevitable for the Basotho nation to undergo changes in the manner in which they produced and later made to produce their material life.

By the time of the introduction of literacy among the Basotho, and subsequently the emergence of modern Sesotho literature, two important factors had manifested themselves as forces of change in the traditional Basotho social system. These forces were Christianity (the religious ISA), which included education as its main vehicle, and the emerging industrialisation of the present-day Republic of South Africa through commercial farming and the mining industry (the economic ISAs). Ngara (1985:36) elaborating on Eagleton's assumption explains the implications of similar social developments elsewhere in Africa as follows:

> The introduction of capitalism in Africa by the colonial powers brought about a technological transformation of the continent and this had a bearing on literary production. It has been said that the artistic modes of production possessed by society are 'a crucial factor in determining ... the very literary form of the work itself'.

On the one hand, Christianity introduced the Basotho to a new way of life where the roles of traditional figures such as kings, chiefs and tribal religious leaders, among others, had either to change, be forsaken or replaced. The church and the school took responsibility of most of the roles. Hence leading to the disintegration of the Basotho society. As Fowler and Smit (1973:416) observe:

> The introduction of Christianity has had far-reaching results on tribal life. By forsaking ancestor-worship, Christian converts did much to weaken the authority of the chief and to break down tribal unity. For these people the missionary worship replaced ancestor-worship, Christian rites in respect of marriage and baptism took the place of the tribal ceremonies and Church hymns were adopted instead of tribal music.

Christianity, as an aspect of cultural imperialism, was mainly advanced by the introduction of education and literacy in mission schools in Lesotho. The content of education, as it were, was primarily aimed at facilitating the process of the conversion of the Basotho to Christianity (cf. Kunene, 1971:xii). This presupposes that the socialisation of a Mosotho child could no longer occur solely within the context of his/her own traditional culture. It happened somewhere between his/her culture and that of the emerging Western Christian[1] culture.

The changes that were introduced in Lesotho inevitably had negative impact on the role of the Basotho parents in child-upbringing. The elements of the Western way of

---

[1] It is important to make a distinction between Christianity and Western Christianity because there is a compelling argument by Parratt (1987:1) that the Christian faith was not necessarily introduced by the missionaries from Western countries to Africa.

life that were introduced into the Basotho traditional life caused serious social strains. As a result of the magnitude of change, the traditional way of child-upbringing was changed significantly to be consistent with the Western way of life or Western civilisation. These developments also had other effects on the fundamental structures of tribal and national unity, which resulted in changes in the social vision.

Within the family unit, a microcosm of a tribe and subsequently of the Basotho nation, the role of the 'father figure' was taken over by the schoolmaster and/or the church-leader. The role of parenting was thus placed under severe strain to adapt to the new social order and/or to wander in the maze of confusion. Moreover, it was not clear where the authority of the parent began and ended, and where that of the school and/or the church began and ended.

This trend had similar impact on tribal life with the result that a new generation of the Basotho children and/or adults with different social outlook emerged. One of the most obvious impacts was on the initiation institutions of the Basotho children. With the church and some Basotho converts discouraging initiation and some conservative Basotho insisting on the practice, society was ripped asunder along ideological lines (cf. Damane & Sanders, 1974:12-13). Basotho fathers could also no longer guide and determine all the developmental stages of their children in a traditional way.

The emerging industrialisation processes through commercial farming and the mining industry also exacerbated this problem in the present Republic of South Africa. Consequently, the significance of the 'father figure' who was the custodian of family life and culture was reduced considerably. A situation developed where men (fathers) had to work away from their homes in Lesotho for relatively long periods, thus neglecting their family duties.

It should be understood that the Basotho men did not choose to abdicate the 'father' roles. They were forced by circumstances created around them by the emerging general mode of production. For instance, for commercial farming to materialise, land had to be acquired, privately owned and clearly demarcated (cf. Fowler & Smit, 1973:269-270). As a result, the Basotho had to be moved from their traditional

communally owned land to make land available for the emerging Boer farming community in parts of the present Republic of South Africa. The annexation of the Basotho land by the British also contributed to their problem.

This process of land expropriation, which has been widely documented, had over a period of time resulted into a number of frontier wars between the Basotho and the *Trekboere*. The British later joined them in these border conflicts after the annexation of the area between the Orange and the Vaal rivers by Sir Harry Smith in 1848 (cf. Damane & Sanders 1974:4).

The expropriation and the reduction of the Basotho land by, among others, numerous declarations of boundaries by the British, through e.g. the so-called The Warden Line and the Treaty of Aliwal North, made it impossible for the Basotho to make a living in their reduced territory (cf. Fowler & Smit, 1973:317-319). Consequently, the Basotho had to sell their labour, in exchange for a living, in some of the white-owned territories of the present-day Republic of South Africa.

These developments did not only mean a change in the means of livelihood and survival of a Mosotho. It also meant a change in and an increase in a new set of needs. Fowler and Smit (1973:419) observe in this regard:

> In order to obtain additional household needs the Bantu was forced to adopt a form of money economy. He was induced [also for those who remained on their land] to sell wool, hides and pigs to obtain money for the purchase of his needs at the trader's shop. Moreover he was obliged to seek work [...] on the farms and on the mines for fixed periods...

Another factor is that these developments were very complex and structured in such a way that they served other related functions. For instance, an increase in the needs went hand in hand with the processes of Christianisation and the creation of a 'compulsory' labour force, as quoted by Molteno (in Kallaway, 1988:60) from the then Lovedale based *The Christian Express*:

> ...the speediest way of creating needs among these people is to Christianise them. As they become Christianised, they will want more clothing, better

> houses, furniture, books, education for their children, and a hundred other things which they do not have now and never had. And all these things they can get only by working, and only by working.

While this extract referred specifically to the amaXhosa communities in the Cape, it also holds for the Basotho. Like the amaXhosa, Christianising also put the Basotho through the process of civilisation, which, in turn gave rise to similar needs. These rising needs among the Basotho were not necessarily met within missionary institutions. Rather, these needs were met by the emerging farming and industrial sector in present day South Africa. The church has in this way succeeded in forcing the Basotho to adopt the capitalist mode of production.

Consequently, the emerging farming and mining industries in the former Transoranje and Transvaal Boer Republics, which were later declared British territory (Fowler & Smit, 1973:305), became natural attractions for the Basotho. By working in these places they would be able to meet their needs for survival. These developments, as it were, did not only have social and political implications for the Basotho. They also had implications for the development of Sesotho literature, from the oral to the written tradition. Themes on industrialisation and urbanisation are some of the most prominent in the Sesotho novel. Folktales were gradually losing their appeal to the community.

In fact, all these socio-historical developments are responsible for shaping the literary output of this period. In other words, these developments provided raw material for authors and artists to work with. As Fischer (1970:55) observes:

> The author does not make the material with which he works: forms, values, myths, symbols, ideologies come to him already worked upon, as the worker in a car assembly plant fashions his product from already processed materials. This means that in the production of an artistic product the author (artist) does not own anything but his creativity. After all, the artist, often perceived as an independent producer, is in fact a social product.

This means, in the final analysis, that the author being socially produced, he is also

a social product. He cannot therefore, as a product, `produce' artistic products in the sense of the word. He can merely reproduce, through artistic portrayals, the modes of existence via characters in real life situations. Therefore

> This so-called independent producer is, whether he wants it or not, dependent on the social totality [...] Thus the commodity becomes the objectification of the inner contradiction of `private economy' in a world of all-embracing social production (op.cit.).

Thus, in this contradiction between social production and the apparent independent producer, lies the essence of the understanding of modern Sesotho literature in the wake of social changes wrought by the capitalisation of the Basotho society through literacy, among others. Ntuli & Swanepoel (1993:29) make the following observation in this regard:

> The written medium turned the communalism of oral performance into the individualism of the lone writer. This implied that the liberties of the bard had been amputated as it were, and replaced by an imprisonment by and uncomfortable reliance on the written word.

In the next subsections we shall investigate how Christianity and industrialisation, which required literacy for their operation, singularly or jointly, functioned in the dynamics of the orality-literature interface. It should be kept in mind however, that, while probing this question of orality-literature interface as a literary phenomenon, both traditions are in fact products of existing general modes of production and their attendant material conditions.

3.4 The implication of modern technology as a factor in the orality-literature interface

Central to the argument of orality-literature interface is the role modern technology has played in advancing the development of modern literature. It is important to understand the impact of technology in the course of advancing literacy and literature. Irele demonstrates how literature and language, and therefore literacy and

technology are related. He says:

> Literature is not, of course, a mere category of language, and cannot be reduced simply to a system of signs but possesses its own peculiar nature and reality which go beyond the immediate fact of language as a means of communication. [...] There is an absolute sense in which it is grounded in language of one kind or the other; **a sense in which literature is [...] inconceivable without recourse to the elementary means of communication represented by language** (1981:43).

Recourse to the elementary means of communication in a language does not only mean to hear and to speak a language. It also means the ability to read and write that language. It is in this wider sense that we shall investigate the impact of technology on the orality-literacy interface. In fact, the art of writing, resulting from literacy, is seen as part and parcel of technology. Ong (1982:81-82) for instance, captures this assumption succinctly when he says:

> ...writing (and especially alphabetic writing) is a technology, calling for the use of tools and other equipment: styli or brushes or pens, carefully prepared surfaces such as paper, [...] as well as inks or paints, and much more.

Ong argues further that "literacy opens possibilities to the word and human existence unimaginable without writing" and that "the shift from orality to writing intimately interrelates with more psychic and social developments..." (ibid. p.175). One would think here of instances of 'silent' as opposed to 'verbalised' communication, where the author presents his thoughts silently on paper or of the reader reading silently from a silent text.

The mode of (silent) literary communication inadvertently requires adaptation to related technology and the acquisition of related literacy skills. What should be noted also is that while technology embodies language, it changed its function significantly in terms of orality *vis a vis* literature. In literature the message might exclude addresser and addressee while in orality the addresser, message and addressee are equally important (cf. Swanepoel, 1994:148).

As a result of the development of literacy, lively interpersonal performances of the Basotho traditional lore began to give way to the impersonal writing and reading, which affected live communication. In this sense, literacy gave rise to a need for the Basotho to adapt psychologically and socially to this mode of literary communication. In fact, this ultimately means that writing (literacy) also functions to restructure human consciousness (cf. Ong, 1982:78).

On a similar note, Oxenham (1980:19) regards literacy as a means of embodying language in a visual form. He argues further that literacy, which implies ability to write, "should be regarded as a very special kind of technology, able radically to transform its user and his society..." There are three important points which McLuhan (1964:184) makes regarding the transformation effect of literacy i.e. the printed word:

(a) Psychically the printed book, an extension of the visual faculty, intensifies perspective and the fixed point of view.

(b) Socially, the typographic extension of man brought in nationalism, industrialism, mass markets, and universal literacy and education.

(c) The most significant of the gifts of typography to man is that of detachment and non-involvement - the power to act without reacting.

McLuhan (1964:182) makes another important observation in this regard, which tends to shed light on Ong's and Oxenham's notions regarding the impact writing and technology have had on society i.e. with regard to a shift from orality to literacy or typography. He argues that the printed word (as a form of writing) "Like any other extension of man, typography had psychic and social consequences that suddenly shifted previous boundaries and patterns of culture". This means that as a result of literacy, the Basotho too had their sphere of existence enlarged through contact with the outer world, and the Western culture in particular.

This thesis seeks to address such socio-historical factors in relation to the issues of the emergence and the development of the Sesotho novel. This background information is important because it does not only explain literacy as a necessity for

literary development. It is also important because such factors will facilitate the understanding of the implications of the "contradiction between reality as presented by those who hold political and economic power, and reality as seen by the creative artist" (Ngara, 1985:24).

3.5 The implications of literacy as factor in the creation of social classes

When any new element is introduced in society, it is bound to elicit different responses. Such responses can differ with regard to the appeal the new element has or in terms of its accessibility or inaccessibility. People so divided in terms of interest or the lack it, often tend to constitute themselves, over a long period of time, into groupings around their shared interests. As long as such differences are not reconciled or tend to form a permanent feature, then such groupings develop into distinct social classes. In Lesotho literacy is one of the elements around which social classes developed. It is from such developments that the 'civilised' class of the learned Basotho and the 'uncivilised' class of the illiterate evolved.

By now the fact that fiction writing in Sesotho emerged during a period of turbulence can be assumed. It was the time of change, as pointed out earlier, from traditional life to modern life: Literacy replacing orality, industrialisation replacing subsistence agriculture, Christianity replacing traditional religion, Western political system replacing traditional systems. Almost the whole organisation of the Basotho society was changing. Literacy emerged at that stage as one of the potent vehicles to introduce Western civilisation by re-organising a Basotho society from a simple traditional social structure to a complex modern social structure.

Oxenham (1980:58) observes that literacy generally flourishes "when large, complex states and cities are organised together with a good deal of craft, industry and trade." However, he points out that literacy is not a prerequisite for this level of organisation, but that literacy is necessary for the sustenance of this kind of social organisation (op cit. p.59).

Oxenham's observation therefore presupposes that whenever literacy programmes

are put in place, they would be geared towards the sustenance of the emerging complex social order. Analogically, new literacy programmes would have an in-built component of the emerging social order in a given society so that literature finally "reflected the new ideology and the new economic system" (Ngara, 1985:23).

Research data have proved that the primary aim of the missionaries' literacy programmes was to Christianise the Basotho. We should be reminded, however, that while Christianization appeared to be the primary objective, it was but the only immediate and dominant social formation, the missionaries could use at the time to introduce wider social changes.

Christianity, as an aspect of the religious ISA, still had to function secondarily with other ISAs, to advance the new mode of production. Even literature in mission schools emerged as an important part of literacy programmes in the first instance. It is only indirectly that it performed the desired function of Christianization. Frow (1986:21) explains how this scenario of literary function is achieved. He says:

> ...the text is seen as a component of the general system of social production, that the 'real' is not its object but its institutional conditions of existence; and on the other hand, as a productive activity, the text is seen as a distinct practice of signification which is related not to a non-discursive truth but to other practices of signification.

In its signifying function a literary text signifies social processes resulting from the general mode of production which society develops. It should be remembered, however, that in the case of Sesotho literary development, capitalism as a mode of production, did not develop internally. It was imposed in the name of Christianity as part of a broader imperialist grand design.

Capitalism in turn also propagated the liberal ideology of individuality, private ownership and industry. All these factors then induced a new way of perceiving life, a new consciousness so to say. In motivating the role of liberal ideology in capitalism during the rise of a novel, Amuta (1989:125) makes the following assertion from which we can draw an analogy:

> The instrumentality of the rise of capitalism and of the bourgeoisie as its pilot class in the rise of the Western novel can [...] be taken for granted. So also can its individualised modes of generation and consumption be assumed. And given the tacit adoption of liberalism as the dominant ideology of the bourgeoisie as a class, the novel could well be said to have furnished an important outlet for liberal ideology in the West...

It can then be assumed that capitalism has in a similar way induced a new consciousness among the emerging Basotho novelists. This new consciousness, which was reinforced by literacy (cf. Ong, 1982:78), raised a desire for individual achievement as opposed to collective achievement, personal pursuits as opposed to communal desires.

In other words, according to the liberal ideology of capitalism, a person is primarily an individual and only secondarily is he/she a member of a community. This liberal view constitutes the basis of a number of perceptual contradictions and conflicts, which were later to ensue in relation to social formations, when this ideology took root among the Basotho.

Some of these changes were nevertheless not directly introduced. Conditions were either created or have developed which would make such changes inevitable for the Basotho society. If we pursue Oxenham's argument that literacy has both the psychic and social effects, a number of observations emerge in relation to developments in Sesotho literature.

The traditional Basotho oral lore was rendered freely by a live performer to a live audience from oral narration and utterances often accompanied by other body movements. This mode of communication established immediate interaction between the artist and/or performer with the audience in a classless communal situation. In a sense, every member of the community could freely access this form of art and take part in the live rendition.

This perception is vindicated by Abrahams' (1986:105-106) who in his research on the works of George Lamming and Chinua Achebe, comes to the following

enlightening conclusion:

> The ethos of traditional society was enshrined in an oral, religious, and literary tradition through which the community transmitted from one generation to generation its customs, values and norms. The poet and the storyteller stood at the centre of this tradition, as the community's chroniclers, entertainers, and collective conscience. Their contribution to society was considered of the greatest significance. **The oral creative act was a communal act rather than the product of a particular genius** (my emphasis).

Consequently, as a result of this practice, traditional lore enjoyed legitimacy amongst members of the community it served. It was a form of art, which was passionately embraced and respected as the most cherished treasure in traditional communities. This was the case because of its truthfulness to cultural existence, which kept the community closely knit. Such a situation was possible because the artist and the audience shared similar social values and cultural practices. As Ngara (1985:21) observes:

> African folktales express socially accepted ideas about goodness, virtue and bravery, while songs go with activities such as threshing, dancing, funeral services and religious ceremonies.

However, with the advent of literacy this social cohesion disintegrated. Henceforth, the artist and the audience interacted mainly through the written word. In addition, and for the audience to understand this written code, special skills were required: skills to read and write. These skills, however, tended to exclude a considerable number of potential participants as they were not immediately accessible to everyone.

One would therefore argue that as a result of literacy, a new class of artists and audience, the literate elitist or petty bourgeoisie, emerged among the Basotho. This development then made literature (written art) class literature. This observation also includes forms of oral lore, which later, although recorded from mouth, could no

longer be accessible to everyone in their written form.

Nonetheless the argument, in this case, applies principally to the novel, which created conditions for a private artist and a private audience. As Fischer (1959:49) observes:

> Capitalism turned everything into a commodity [...] dissolved the old world into a cloud of whirling molecules, destroyed all direct relationships between producer and consumer, and flung all products onto an anonymous market to be bought or sold. [...] For the first time in the history of mankind the artist became a 'free' artist, a 'free' personality, free to the point of absurdity, of icy loneliness. Art became an occupation that was half-romantic, half-commercial.

By analogy, this 'freedom' was only possible and inherent mainly in the emerging literate Basotho bourgeoisie class. In a sense, this observation vindicates Ngara's (1985:30) claim, referred to earlier, that the African novel also arose with the emergence of a class. Among the Basotho, in turn, this is the class that espoused Western value systems.

Beyond this point, the assumption also means that this class tended to assume a dominant position within the Basotho society. Owing to the fact that it did not have significant opposition, in terms of cultural production, its ideas acquired from missionary institutions tended to dominate the cultural landscape. Subsequently, the views of this class, though at times in contradiction with reality, emerged as part of the development of the Sesotho novel.

3.6 The implications of modes of production for the orality-literature interface in relation to the development of the Sesotho novel

Until the arrival of the missionaries, the Basotho had depended entirely on the oral tradition. This was handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth (cf. Tekateka 1967, Moloi 1973, Ntuli & Swanepoel 1993, etc.). Such oral tradition comprised *ditshomo* (folklore narratives consisting of folktales, myths and legends)

and *dithoko* (praise poetry) (cf. Swanepoel, 1985:102-106). The *dithoko* oral forms related to praises of kings and warriors as well as rituals such as initiation and divination. There has as well been songs related to traditional events such as marriage ceremonies, hoeing, harvesting, war, etc.

In some cases, these oral forms have emerged to have an element of idealism, which subscribed to the given order of things. From a materialist perspective, this idealism is consistent with the unsophisticated traditional communal mode of production or feudalism in Europe, which was sustained by such creative oral, and other art forms (cf. Ngara, 1985:21). This has been evidenced by the wealth of philosophies drawn from the Basotho way of life and their experiences which manifest themselves in oral forms such as *maele* (idiomatic expressions and proverbs) as well as *dilotho* (riddles), for instance.

These forms of the oral tradition carried the education, religion, social values and norms of the Basotho community, which were based on their ways of life at the time. Expressions such as '*Phiri e jewa moreneng*' (A hyena is eaten at the royal kraal) and, '*Kgomo mmu sellamoreneng, ha e lla moreneng metsaneng ho a ronana*,' (The bull bellows from the royal kraal, when it bellows from the royal kraal the villages echo), come to mind. These expressions, for instance, demonstrate the central position of a king in the life of the Basotho nation, and how they valued the wealth of livestock, and cattle in particular.

Another observation one could make regarding traditional lore is that, even in that era of naive traditional idealism, the element of realism had already manifested itself especially in the *dithoko* (praise poetry). This form of poetry as it were, focused mainly on kings, warriors and tribal customs and rituals. In most instances, praise poems recount real events of conquests in various wars, the kings or warriors had actually fought.

Although such *dithoko* could have, for artistic purposes, appeared to have been embellished, exaggerated or became somewhat historically inept, they have always been inspired by real events surrounding particular individuals. As Guma (1977:151-152) observes:

> These are traditional praises of chiefs and warriors. They are based on actual deeds or actions connected with the particular individual who is praised [...] The various battles in which he participated, as well as his achievements in them, are all included in his praises.

To this category of *dithoko* was added later on another category of self-praise poetry, *dithoko tsa ditsamayanaha* (praises of travellers), popularly known as *difela*. These are praises of ordinary people, which recounted personal life experiences of Basotho men on their way to work and at the work place. In the self-praises men lament hardships, loneliness, and spiritual and mental torture, among others, but also praised their own exploits in real life (cf. Moletsane, 1983:iv).

Therefore the emergence of new socio-economic developments changed focus from traditional figures such as kings and warriors. It then shifted to the life conquests of ordinary people in their battles in life situations. These *difela* (chants) do not only illustrate a shift of focus in subjects of praise. They also underline a fundamental change in social vision resulting from the changes that have affected the Basotho way of life. Such changes are consistent with change from the traditional communal way of life to a capitalist one. In the traditional community the king was a central figure in community affairs but in a capitalist world one's social position is determined by the economic power one wields.

Under capitalism, with its attendant liberal ideology (cf. Amuta, 1989:125-126), individuals have to take responsibility of their own lives, in the first instance. This, on the surface, also renders the existing social order prone to challenge in a way that one could change one's personal circumstances. However, in the second instance, those personal circumstances are governed by institutions of social formations such as the religious, the educational, the political, the legal and the economical, whose practices are consistent with capitalist societies. This social configuration, however, renders efforts to challenge the status quo otiose.

It is nevertheless in the interaction of individuals with these institutions that contradictions and conflicts are revealed. This is the position because social institutions are not only **stakes** but they are also **sites** for class struggles (cf.

Eagleton, 1978). The capitalist social class structure makes such conflicts and contradictions inevitable because it is founded on unequal power relations.

One would argue therefore that the new life experiences of the Basotho, in interaction with Western social institutions, not only induced a new social consciousness. Such experiences also created another terrain of class power struggle. It is this situation, among others, which created a breeding ground for the emergence of the *difela* as a literary genre among the Basotho.

While the *difela*, in part, illustrate power relations between the employer and the employee at micro level, at macro level they also illustrate the capitalist social power relations between the haves and the have-nots. Because economic power controls institutions in a capitalist economy, the exploits of the dynasties of the Basotho kingship were bound to crumble. Economic magnates took their place.

Subsequently the *dithoko*, which were inspired by and sung for those dynasties were affected in the similar way the kingship institution was affected. Consequently, the entire Basotho nation was plunged into a kind of swim or sink situation. As Fowler and Smit (1973:419) observe:

> Towards the end of the nineteenth century in many ways tribal life was crumbling. The Church and School, the magistrate, the trader, the farmer and the mines were all playing an important part in bringing about the detribalization of the Bantu. At the same time the Bantu was finding it extremely difficult to adapt himself to the demands of the new social, economic and political order which was emerging.

It can now be assumed, resulting from these developments, that the seeds of realism, which were sown in Sesotho literature via the *dithoko* and the *difela* genres found expression in the novel. One would argue therefore that, realism, coupled with the tradition of narration in folklore, seems among others, to have laid the foundation for the development of the Sesotho novel. This is a logical assumption if one considers that the novel is one of the genres, which is about people in real life situations. Corroborating a similar view Amuta (1989:126) claims that:

> In its rootedness in realist epistemology as a philosophical foundation, the novel form as part of the cultural arsenal of an emergent capitalism put itself at the service of all the vices to which its informing political economy was subject.

Even though not probing the principles of production *per se*, Gildenhuys (1973:266) recognises the impact praise poetry has had on the development of the novel. He claims, for instance, that 63% and 52% of Sesotho novels exhibit the extent of the impact praise poetry and songs subsequently, have had on this genre. He also recognises the impact socio-historical developments have had on the development of the Sesotho novel from the perspective of themes.

Several other African scholars such as Tekateka (1967), Moloi (1973), Swanepoel (1976 & 1985), Msimang (1986) and Sirayi (1989), among others, also acknowledge the effect traditional lore has had in the development of the African novel. Msimang (1986:205), for instance, makes this observation with regard to the Zulu novelists:

> Certain statements, which are made by these novelists in their novels, which allude to folktales, constitute the most compelling evidence to the fact that they were consciously under the influence of folktales when writing their novels.

Sirayi (1989:52), who has also made a study of the African novel, also concludes his survey of this subject, in relation to the isiXhosa novel, in the following manner:

> Evidence of oral and early literary forms identified in the isiXhosa novel must leave one with no doubt that both orality and literacy have been the shaping forces behind the emergence and the development of the isiXhosa novel.

One could then conclude that, unlike the English novel, whose argument on its development seems to have focussed mainly on the epic, the arguments on the development of the African novel take into account a wider range of folklore genres as the possible fountain head of the novel.

Therefore the background of the development of the African novel does not only

depend on the portrayal of the hero. It also takes into account the circumstances of the hero as just another member of society. He is another member of society who, like any other member, is interacting with social reality.

Another observation in this regard is that, characters in the novel, except in some historical novels, are mainly ordinary people who are interacting with reality while trying to find the meaning of life in situations they are confronted with. This does not, however, suggest that the Sesotho novel, or any African novel, is purely realist in nature as will be demonstrated later in this study. The dominant feature appears generally to be that of the author demonstrating commitment to a particular line of thought or worldview (cf. Simmonse, 1984).

Following these arguments, one could assume that the emergence and the development of the Sesotho novel can at best be understood against the background of the following factors:

- The tradition of narration in folklore stories - which incorporated elements of idealism,
- Realism in *dithoko*[2] (praise poetry) and *difela* (chants),
- The history of folklore narratives, as well as
- Socio-economic developments, in addition to the introduction of the novel by the missionaries as a literary genre among the Basotho.

Such elements form part and parcel of the material life of the Basotho and subsequently the material for their artistic works. Amuta makes an enlightening observation, which opposes the tendency to wish away the link between traditional and modern literature. He argues that even realism, a modern literary concept, cannot undermine this link. He says:

---

[2] This assumption also makes *diboko* (totems), through which the Basotho relate to their environment by identifying with certain animals, another possible factor.

> ... nothing precludes realism in literature of a given society from incorporating elements of the supernatural for as long as those elements, as active constituents of the psychosocial world, affect people's actions at the level of material life experience (1989:127).

Irele, another advocate of the principle of continuity in literary development, seems to settle the controversy surrounding the relationship between traditional and modern literature, once and for all. He says:

> ...traditional African literature is something which exists in our indigenous languages and which related to our traditional societies and cultures, while modern African literature has grown out of the rapture created within our indigenous history and way of life by the colonial experience... (ibid. 1981:27).

This observation fully captures the situation of the African novel. It is a blending of two disparate, but related traditions. Consequently, no single factor can really be considered adequate to explain the emergence of modern African literature in general, and the development of the Sesotho novel, in particular. A view that ignores the material conditions at the time of its emergence, and subsequently the development of the Sesotho novel, can only provide a lopsided account of the emergence of this genre.

A critique of the Sesotho novel, starting from the early days, should therefore pay particular attention to the attendant material conditions that characterised the life of the Basotho. Such an approach should consider especially changes in modes of production and dominant social formations or ideologies as they emerged during various eras.

3.7 Conclusion

In the foregoing discussion we have attempted to demonstrate that the development of the Sesotho novel cannot be attributed to a single factor. The Sesotho novel has been a product of a multiplicity of factors both internal and external. As alluded to

earlier, the interaction of such factors was not necessarily harmonious. A number of contradictions and conflicts have emerged as a result. All of these issues will further be highlighted in their context when we examine the early Sesotho novels in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

THE EARLY SOUTHERN SOTHO NOVEL (1900-1930): THE PERIOD OF BIRTH, NURTURING AND GROWTH

4.1 Introduction

The period under consideration as the period of birth, nurturing and growth because it does not only constitute the cradle of Sesotho literature, but its development and growth as well. It actually covers the documentation of the formative stages of a new phase in Sesotho literary history. The introduction of literacy in Lesotho around the mid-nineteenth century resulted in the nucleus of Basotho authors emerging from this country. Apart from other genres, four novels, three by Mofolo and one by Segoete, emerged within this period. It is also the period that was dominated by the Basotho of Lesotho, and Morija, where the missionaries had settled, became one of the places that were synonymous to enlightenment in this part of the sub-continent. Other areas where the Basotho resided, such as parts of the present day South Africa, were not yet affected by this development in those early days of enlightenment. However, as will be demonstrated later, literacy was but one aspect of the broader missionary agenda, whose implications will also be highlighted in this study.

This chapter seeks to explore ideologies in relation to the material conditions, which prevailed during the period of the birth, nurturing and the growth of the Sesotho novel. This will be coupled with the exploration of possible social implications the contradictions immanent within such ideologies might have had in relation to existing socio-cultural practices at the time. The survey is also pursued with the understanding that a work of art, a novel in this case, may appear to either re-inforce or to negate certain societal perceptions of reality at any given time.

Therefore, the extent to which these early novels appear to have either re-inforced or negated those perceptions, will be highlighted by exploring the existing and emerging ideologies of the period in question *vis-a-vis* perceived reality expressed

in novels. This, in a sense, presupposes the adoption of an approach that seeks to understand the rationale behind such ideologies as products of socio-cultural practices. Such understanding will ultimately demonstrate how ideas or views which are generated in the process of social discourse find their way into literary practice i.e. both through writing and through critical analysis.

4.2 Exploring literary practice as an epitome of reality

If we pursue the argument made earlier that a novel has characteristics of realism, and further that the hero in the novel strives to change society, we can then consider a situation where a novel is scrutinised against social reality as assumed. Such an approach does not, however, suggest that there is, or should be a situation of one-to-one correspondence between the novel and social reality. Rather it suggests that both 'realities' as expressed in society and in the novel, are in fact ideological - ideological in the sense that they express the way people perceive things to be like. Therefore the focus is on the extent to which these ideologies - perceptions of reality, tend to be in agreement or in disagreement with the manner in which they are portrayed or expressed.

For instance, as we are well aware, one of the dominant ideological views of life among the Basotho is based on the view of communalism i.e. living for one another. According to this principle people are not only expected to live with others, but they are expected to live for one another as well. This principle is clearly expressed in the popular Sesotho adage *motho ke motho ka batho* (a human being is human because of others). However, the liberal view of individual existence, which underpins the characteristics of the novel hero, is in direct contrast with the Basotho philosophy behind this adage. The whole meaning of being among the Basotho is governed by this understanding. Or as Setiloane (1986:41) puts it: "The matter of *Botho* (the being of being human) finds its fulfilment in community."

However, when it comes to the manner in which characters are portrayed in the 'reality' as expressed in a novel, the situation is completely different. The novel

hero does not necessarily move along with society, but in most cases, whether for good or bad, tends to move against it. He/she does not live with and for others. He/she lives for him/herself guided by the objective he/she is pursuing - that of changing society. Such portrayal of the novel hero, in a sense, also tends to reflect the author's own perception of or attitude towards reality. Certain social practices may not go well with him/her and as a result he/she might like to challenge and to change the existing situation via his/her work.

Something of paramount importance in this argument is the fact that this understanding of African communal existence is also closely linked with the notion of the existence of a Deity/Divinity i.e. *Modimo*, which is regarded by Basotho as a force, which is the source of life. Evidently, any change in the perception of life by the Basotho would have an effect, positive or otherwise, on this cherished philosophy.

As argued in the previous chapter, for the Christian institution to take root and to continue to exist, literacy was necessary. This notion also holds true for the continuance of the education institution, which was an introduction of a new element in an existing culture. Tekateka (1967), Moloi (1972), Swanepoel (1976), etc. are all agreed that one of the immediate tasks of the missionaries of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (PEMS), Arbousset, Casalis and Gosselin was to commit Sesotho to writing. This necessitated the building of institutions "aimed at producing sufficient and competent Basotho teachers or evangelists to man their schools and churches" (Tekateka, 1967:3). It is from among the Basotho who graduated from such mission institutions those where earlier authors emerged. By design the training of evangelists and teachers has had a diffrent effect on their perception of reality or their ideology. Therefore when they, together with missionaries, produced their literary works, such works epitomised, to a large extent, their perception of reality which was not necessarily in line with previously held perceptions.

Subsequently, missionaries and their Basotho converts had a fair share in producing a diversity of early writings in Sesotho literature, which conveyed such

new perceptions. Such literary works ranged from school-readers, the recordings of folklore, serialised stories and translations (cf. Maphike in Gerard, 1993:91-128). It is therefore not surprising that the very first novel to emerge from the pen of a Mosotho is Thomas Mofolo's *Moeti oa Bochabela* (1907), himself a graduate of a missionary institution. It is this novel, if ever it is one, which sets the stage for the study of the development of this genre in Sesotho, apart from Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, which was translated as *Leeto la Mokreste*.

The period 1900-1930 saw the emergence of three other novels by Basotho authors. Two were by the same author, Thomas Mofolo, namely *Pitseng* (1910/68) and *Chaka* (1925/73). His teacher and mentor Everitt Lechesa Segoete, who produced his novel, Monono ke mohodi ke mouwane (1910/62) joined him in this venture (cf. Moloi, 1972). We shall now proceed to investigate what the critique of these four novels has to offer in terms of their literary and ideological output.

Such output will be considered in the light of the dominant ideology of the epoch as a manifestation of the relationship between literature and the prevailing ideology (cf. Ngara, 1985:22). This argument will further be guided by Simonse's (1982:453) assertion that the essence of African literature lies in its mirror function and that its dominant feature is the social commitment of the author. In this instance, christianising or religionism as the commitment of the authors of the period can be assumed.

4.3 Religion as the dominant ideology of the epoch

Religion manifests itself as a strong ideological force in the initial Sesotho novels. However, such literary works do not exhibit a monolithic view of religion. The early Sesotho novels primarily exhibit two contrasting views with regard to religion, which can be attributed to the problem of grappling with perceptual changes. There are those novels that express an optimistic view of religion as well as those that express a pessimistic view of religion.

Such different views do not merely illustrate variances, which are in contradiction with each other. They also at times illustrate orchestrated conflicting social

perceptions. The other dimension is that such contradictions are also considered to demonstrate the extent to which Christianity has succeeded or failed, as a religious formation, among the Basotho. Conclusions pertaining to each of these views are reached on the basis of the end product of the perception the author reflects.

An optimistic view of religion, on the one hand, creates an impression that it is advantageous to pursue the Christian faith because God can turn one's life into a success story. A pessimistic view, on the other hand, creates an impression that there is really nothing worth committing one's life to, irrespective of religious affiliation. These arguments are pursued on the understanding that the ultimate in human life rests in the hands of a deity, not necessarily as a result of one's personal efforts.

4.3.1 An optimistic view of religion

The first two novels by Mofolo namely, *Moeti wa Botjhabela* and *Pitseng* can be can be slotted into one category in terms of their ideological reflection. They are both dominated by religious considerations wherein Christianity emerges as the dominant, hence acceptable, ideology of the epoch. However, to have a certain dominant ideology in a particular epoch does not necessarily mean that all literary views would support it. Some views expressed in literary works might disagree and even oppose such an ideology as manifestations of sub- and/or contra-cultures as will be illustrated in the following arguments.

4.3.1.1 Perspectives on Moeti wa Botjhabela (Mofolo)

As can be expected, scholars who studied the early Sesotho novel have to a large degree covered Mofolo's novels sufficiently. One would further assume that *Moeti wa Botjhabela*, as a pioneering work, has received significant attention. However, because of the objectives of those early researches, issues which are considered important in this study have largely either been ignored or not sufficiently probed. The same can apply to *Pitseng*, although this novel demonstrates a significant perceptual shift towards realism in relation to the former, which tends to border on

idealism.

This perceptual shift calls to question the significance of both the aesthetic and authorial ideologies. In the former we consider issues relating to genre-type while in the latter we consider the author's own insertion of `self' in the mould of the particular genre. It will therefore be of significance not only to consider why the Basotho authors wrote novels but also why they wrote them in a particular manner. Such an argument will help to clarify the question of influence, among others.

Numerous claims have been made to the effect that Mofolo's *Moeti wa Botjhabela* has been inspired and/or influenced by Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Nonetheless emphasis seems to have been largely placed on content rather than on genre influence (cf. Tekateka, 1967 and Swanepoel, 1976:5 & 1987:96). It is however Swanepoel, among others, who also recognises the question of possible generic influence. He claims that Bunyan's book "was for many blacks a first acquaintance with the novel as a literary genre" (quoted by Maphike in Gérard, 1993:96-97). Amuta (1989:126) who shares this view by claiming that: "a certain familiarity with the Western novel was catalytic to the rise of the African novel".

Ngara (1985:31) takes this argument further to explain the reason why the novel became the logical choice and emerged as a popular genre for early African writers. He says, in the text to which he also makes reference to Mofolo's *Chaka*:

> In African tradition, the legend was the centre of art and cultural life. [...] The reading of literature at school and at university later reinforced these stories which the young people listened to at home; and, naturally, the most accessible genre was the novel.

Amuta (1989), on the other hand, adopts a view that seems to harmonise the possibilities of both content and genre influence. He makes the following conclusive observation in this regard, which echoes the views that are fundamental in this study, and are shared by numerous other scholars of African literature. He says:

> Some critics have argued that for the existence of a tradition of narrative art in different pre-colonial African societies as providing kind of contextual manure for the external impetus provided by formal familiarity with the Western novel (ibid. p.126).

In relation to content Tekateka (1967) seems to have made the most conclusive observation of *Moeti wa Botjhabela*. His views are based on issues regarding the assumed inspiration of *Moeti* by Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* and his study has yielded very useful insights. While not rejecting out of hand the possible inspiration of Mofolo by Bunyan's book, he recognises the originality of the former. Hence it is not only the aesthetic ideology that gives character to the text, but its authorial ideology as well. Says Tekateka (1967:13) in this regard:

> The kind of influence Mofolo derived from John Bunyan cannot be manifested in likeness, but in common seriousness of concern with essential human issues. This profound seriousness **is due to his evangelical background and his reverent attitude towards life** (my emphasis).

The last part of Tekateka's assertion, which reflects Mofolo's authorial ideology, is significant to the argument of this thesis as it is based on the premise that literature is in fact a product of specific material conditions that shape the author's perception of reality. Furthermore these material conditions are determined, in the final analysis, by the existing mode of production, which is in turn manifest in, or are sustained by social formations or Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs). To this effect Amuta (1989:126) argues that:

> Colonialist education was a factor in Africa's literary development, especially in the case of the novel, to the extent that it was instrumental in the creation of a colonised bourgeoisie.

Amuta's position inadvertently explains why some African novelists have tended to present a distorted picture of their own world. This also clarifies the argument made earlier that there will be at one or the other time a dominant ISA (or ISAs)

which will be prominent, apart from exhibiting contradictions between it and other ISAs. The ISA that is dominant, often carries the express objective, as a social illusion or consciousness, of the existing general mode of production. Subsequently, literature as a product of societal illusion would reflect such forms of consciousness. This is primarily so because:

> ...art is not man's creation, it is a product (and the producer is not a subject centred in his creation, he is an element in a situation or a system): different - in being a product - from religion, which has chosen its dwelling among all the spontaneous illusions of spontaneity (Macherey, 1978:67).

By definition a product is produced and marketed to fulfil a particular primary and/or secondary objective. The importance of such an objective would also in turn determine the market value of the product, something that introduces the fetish element in the product. The related market value will then be manifest in the demand made on the product. It is as a result of the perceived value of *Moeti wa Botjhabela* that Dieterlen wrote as follows, appealing for its purchase:

> Today there has come into existence a book which ought to be published and read by each and every one whom calls himself a Mosotho or who loves the Basotho and their traditions. Its name is *Moeti oa Bochabela*. Its writer is Thomas Mofolo who works at the Book Depot at Morija.
>
> .....
>
> It is important that you realise that this book is the very first one that has come out of the head of a Mosotho ever since the Basotho existed under the sun (Kunene, 1989:82).

This appeal to the market by Dieterlen, was made in spite of the underlying mission of the book, which was to make the Basotho to under-value their traditions as well as their being. In this case, for instance, the market value and the related demand, especially its Christian tone, also necessitated the translation of *Moeti* into English under the title *The traveller of the East* in 1934 (cf. Larson, 1972:3).

The significance of this development is that as a literary product, *Moeti wa Botjhabela* had primarily to fulfil the function of an artistic need. Secondarily, in line with aims of the missionaries, it had to fulfil the function of christianising the Basotho. In terms of its content *Moeti* is designed to induce, via the portrayal of Fekisi, the unquestioning faith in Christianity among the Basotho. The other function served by the translation of *Moeti* into English, a relatively accessible language to the international community is not merely for a literary value. It also makes a statement by demonstrating to the international community the impact Christianity had had on the Basotho community to the extent that it even influenced their literature. This perception is confirmed by the following observation made by Kunene (1989:63):

> 'Then one fine day, he began to create an imaginative work, absolutely original, and which first appeared in *Lesedinyana*.' With these words H Dieterlen and F Kohler refer to an event which the missionaries of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society must have considered as one of the highlights of their success in the religious and educational spheres in Lesotho. The event was the publication of Mofolo's *Moeti oa Bochabela* by the Morija Press in September 1907.

What further lends substance to this assumption is the fact that *Moeti* was published just one year before the celebration of the sixty-fifth year of the PEMS's missionary work in Lesotho. The missionaries consequently recalled this event with much pride and adulation (cf. Kunene, 1989:63).

This observation does not, however, suggest that other latter books like *Pitseng* and *Monono ke mohodi ke mouwane*, for instance, were less important to this mission and hence did not warrant translation for wider consumption. Rather it suggests that they did not deem it expedient to translate them because a statement regarding the success of missionary work had already been made to the international community through the translation of *Moeti*. Therefore *Pitseng* and *Monono* would merely be extensions of that success story.

Another aspect that needs to be probed at this point, is whether or not Mofolo had

full grasp, in terms of authorial ideology, of the implications of fiction when he set out to write. While it is difficult to give a conclusive answer to this question, one can, however, make a number of assumptions regarding his novel. Mofolo's immediate challenge was how he would insert himself within the mould of aesthetic ideology. Kunene (1989:65) aptly captures this dilemma when he remarks that:

> It appears that Mofolo fails to distinguish between those things which must universally be recognised as evil, i.e. repugnant to the moral sensibility of any society (wanton killing, murder, sexual promiscuity are but a few examples), and what must be accepted as legitimate customs and traditions of the Basotho regardless of what anybody else might think about them.

Kunene singles out here the institution of *mmampodi* among herdboys, which was intended to teach them to submit to a social hierarchy and to recognise the role of leadership. One could also add here the institution of *lebollo* (initiation) as well as collective parental responsibility in bringing up and disciplining children. These are some of the traditional social principles that Mofolo handles recklessly in his first two novels, *Moeti* and *Pitseng*.

This trend is not surprising because according to Ngugi, the consequence of the teaching of the Christian missionaries meant that African customs had to be rejected outrightly. According to him:

> It meant rejection of these values and rituals that held us together: it meant adopting what, in effect, was a debased European middle-class mode of living and behaviour. The European missionary had attacked the primitive rights of our people, had condemned our beautiful African dances, images of our Gods, recoiling from their suggestion of satanic sensuality. The African convert did the same, often with greater zeal, for he had to prove how Christian he was through this rejection of his past roots (cf. Killam, 1980:8).

The manner in which Mofolo defiles Basotho cultural institutions and practices in *Moeti* is typical of this assertion.

However, on further examination it emerges that Mofolo was trying to produce a particular literary product – a novel. For instance, in the portrayal of his hero, Fekisi and his circumstances, in *Moeti*, there is evidently a shift from the naive perception of reality characterising traditional society. In traditional society meaning to life was a given, as it is the case in folklore and the era of idealism. In such a worldview one is either rewarded for virtue or is punished for vice. In *Moeti* Mofolo attempts to demonstrate an era of realism where people were beginning to search for meaning in life. However, for Mofolo this change of worldview seems to represent a movement from darkness to light. In other words, his traditional culture symbolises darkness while Christianity symbolises light.

It becomes evident, therefore, from the outset that in Mofolo's *Moeti* "the movement that is precipitated by this description can only be in one direction, namely towards light" (Kunene, 1989:63). However, the position he adopts already serves as fetters that prevent Mofolo from exploring his environment objectively, and realistically in the portrayal of his hero, Fekisi. Fekisi's portrayal vacillates between light and darkness which finds expression in what he perceives as good and evil in society, not necessarily what is socially acceptable or not acceptable in his culture.

Fekisi confronts his society and its values, and asks questions with the intention of finding answers. However, he does not persist in this inquiry by making a commitment to change his society from the answers he gets. Instead, he abandons his society and undertakes a miraculous journey to Ntswanatsatsi (where the sun rises) to seek peace. Such behaviour is not consistent with the novel hero. This explains why Fekisi's journey is subsequently reduced to a fairy tale.

His entire journey is characterised by miracles that merely symbolise spiritual meaning. It does not demonstrate human adventure where a character is perpetually engaged in resolving problems within his society. Evidently, Mofolo

can neither adequately handle the conflict between aesthetic and authorial ideologies, on the one hand, and that between the dominant ideology and reality, on the other.

Hence *Moeti* is described by a number of scholars as an allegory rather than a novel (cf. Swanepoel, 1983:61). Mofolo merely uses the realistic environment at the beginning of the story to motivate Fekisi's reasons for departure from his society. Thereafter he dwells completely on the spiritual realm where the character is neither influenced by his experiences or by his interaction with society. This tendency can only serve one purpose: to demonstrate the unidirectional movement from darkness to light, but not the portrayal of a complex novel hero. Hence Kunene's (1989:66) remark on Fekisi's no-return journey: "Intent not to return, i.e. permanent exile, must therefore mean that the protagonist regards the situation that made him leave as beyond his power to change".

In this way Mofolo diminishes the significance of the conflict which Fekisi initially had with his society and deprives him of the opportunity to deal with the situation as is characteristic of the novel hero. In his spiritual pilgrimage Fekisi does not emerge to be influencing the situation he finds himself in and this has a negative effect on Mofolo's purpose for the book. The purpose to induce the Basotho to reject their culture and to embrace Christianity. Mofolo tends, in this way, to place Christianity beyond human reach. Thus making it something of no consequence in the real life of the Basotho.

In a similar manner, Fekisi emerges to be of no consequence as he lives in a strange world, far removed from the one the Basotho and humanity in general, are acquainted with. The mythology of the Basotho regarding their notion of the Creator and creation, which Mofolo tends to employ, does not rescue the situation either. It is again this failure by Mofolo to ground the events surrounding his character within a realistic context, which lends his work to be classified merely as an allegory.

Nonetheless if we view *Moeti* from the perspective of authorial ideology, our opinion about the book seems to change. The examination of the authorial

ideology helps us to understand how the author handles a particular genre without necessarily pinning him/her down to strict rules. The observation Lukacs (1971:80) makes in relation to the portrayal of a hero in a novel seems to guide us in following the argument in this regard. He says:

> The immanence of meaning, which the form of the novel requires, lies in the hero finding out through experience, that a mere glimpse of meaning is the highest that life has to offer, and that this glimpse is the only thing worth the commitment of an entire life, the only thing by which the struggle will have been justified.

That ultimate meaning, from Fekisi's portrayal, is peace with God. Although Mofolo displays inclinations towards idealism in *Moeti*, the foregoing quotation definitely compels us to have a second look at his book. We realise that, in terms of aesthetic ideology, Mofolo does exhibit some features of the novel form in the portrayal of his hero. From the outset Mofolo portrays Fekisi digging through the maze of his traditional experience for the true meaning of life and *Modimo* (God). The author raises questions whose answers could ultimately turn Christianity into an acceptable form of commodity. These would also enhance the marketability of the product by appealing to the cultural experiences of the Basotho. Using Fekisi, Mofolo says:

> Ntho e teng e kileng ya tsietsa Fekisi haholo. A e nahana bosiu le motsheare, a mpa a sitwa ho e fumana. Mme ke e nngwe ya tse ileng tsa mo tlosa naheng ya habo, le ho ba habo kaofela. O ne a lelalla lehodimong, a leka ho bona moo pula e tswang teng. O ne a ipotsa hore na pula ke eng, e tswa kae? Maru keng, a tswa kae? (p.12).
>
> (There was something that extremely baffled Fekisi. He thought about it day and night but could not grasp it. It is one of the things that made him leave his country and his people. He would look up into the sky, trying to see where the rain came from. He would ask himself what the rain is, where does it come from? The clouds, what are they, where do they come from?)

This passage ideally underlines the predicament the novel hero has to face in coming to terms with the outer reality, which he has either to identify with or to reject. It is this predicament that then induces, finally, a desire from the hero to search for authentic values. Indeed, as Kunene (1989:66) puts it in relation to Fekisi's pilgrimage: "This is a trademark of a quest traveller. His conviction, his determination to obtain what he is searching for, are to be tested".

However, this determination also underlines the novelist's predicament in portraying `what is' in relation to `what ought to be'. Mofolo has to strike a balance between his perception of social reality and what he is expected by the producer and consumer to achieve. The following excerpt illustrates the way in which the author tries to deal with this problem by presenting society as being unable to give all the answers to the hero:

> Ha a fihla hae, a botsisisa haholo hore na medimo keng, mme a bolellwa hore medimo ke ba shweleng ba ho Modimo. Ha thwe Modimo o lokile, o hlwekile, o hana tse mpe kaofela. O batla batho ba lokileng. Mona teng a batla a ferekana hore na, ha batho ba tseba jwalo, empa ba le babe hakalo, lebaka la bona ke lefe? (p.13-14)
>
> (When he arrived at home he enquired as to whom the gods are, and he was told that the gods are the deceased who are with God. He was told that God is just, He is pure, and He is against all evil. He needs just people. On this score he nearly became confused, asking himself that if people know this, what could be their reason for being so wicked?).

The understanding of God and His relationship with the people emerges to provide the basis for dealing with the problem of `what' is and `what ought to be' in this novel. Fekisi expects to get answers to certain religious questions, which his society cannot provide. The attempt by the author to resolve this problem ultimately underlines the tension or contradiction around the religious social formation in this instance.

Essentially, the above two excerpts do not only provide us with insights into the

mode of the portrayal of a hero in the novel as well as the tension experienced by the author in such portrayal. They also lay the basis for the probing of material conditions that inform such portrayal. Seeing that ideology of religion emerges as a dominant factor, which informs the story line of the author, one would expect the same to reveal the author, through his hero, moving towards a collision cause with society.

Mofolo's opening chapter reveals that the notion of a Divinity (God) is not foreign to the Basotho. The Basotho had always regarded God as the *creator* of all things but different in all respects from that creation (cf. Setiloane, 1986:23). However, Mofolo immediately introduces an element to this notion, which is foreign to the Sesotho cultural understanding of God. That is the notion of man as the image of God, which establishes an immediate relationship with Him, thus making Him to be conceptualised to be like man:

> E ne e le motho ka botlalo bohle ba lentswe lena le reng *motho*; motho kamoo Mmopi a neng a rere hore motho a be jwalo, setshwantsho sa sebele sa Ya entseng tsohle tse bonwang le tse sa bonweng, [...] (p.1)
>
> (He was a complete person in the sense of the word man, as the Creator had planned him to be, the real image of the One who has made the visible and the invisible).

This perception of God already presents Mofolo as ambassador of Christianity and in turn informs the portrayal of his hero, Fekisi. According to the Basotho (and other African nations) tradition *Modimo* is not immediately accessible to man. He maintains distance and is therefore regarded with great reverence. In fact it is even taboo to make casual reference to the Creator (cf. Setiloane, 1986:27). That is why even communication with God is done via ancestors because there is a strong belief that the dead persons are with God. As Guma (1967:9) states in a footnote that:

> An African will ordinarily approach a superior through an intermediary. Ancestors, who had been known on earth, acted as such intermediaries

between man and God, just as saints and the virgin Mary are used in the Roman Catholic Church.

In fact, Mofolo also mentions that God was at one point closely associated with man but that He has receded because of man's inequity. In order to give credibility to this notion he is compelled to portray a situation, which justifies God's withdrawal from humanity. That situation is the evil primitive Basotho society. Such portrayal in turn makes Fekisi's rejection of the life of his community and his search for God justifiable. In other words, Fekisi's search for authentic values becomes only realisable in his search for God. This perception is consistent with Christian teachings that man's source of knowledge and peace is only found in his direct relationship with God.

Consequently, *Moeti wa Botjhabela* emerges to have been aimed at propagating the need to seek the Christian God, who is accessible but who nevertheless does reside among evil people. Mofolo portrays a situation where Fekisi asks question directly to God because the latter's informants had impressed on him that there is in fact no physical place called Ntswanatsatsi (cf. Swanepoel, 1976:8). It comes as a surprise, however, that while in Christian teachings there is no physical place on earth where God is confined, Mofolo opts for such a notion. Fekisi is sceptical about his informants but he surprisingly undertakes an easterly pilgrimage - which is a direction to some physical destination. This demonstrates Mofolo's problem in locating his theme properly: He deals with spiritual and yet terrestrial issues, Christian yet traditional Basotho beliefs.

It is a known fact that at the time of such propagation of Christianity, the missionaries regarded most, if not all, Basotho belief systems as pagan and ungodly. It is on the basis of such observation that Kunene (1989:70) asks the following question:

> How can Ntswanatsatsi prevail if the customs, traditions and values that are its legacy for the Basotho are equated with evil? How can the Basotho's Original Innocence abide within a foreign ideology and a foreign conceptualisation of Being?

This is a legitimate question, which any Mosotho would ask about his very being. However, without providing answers to his question, Kunene concludes on a pessimistic tone that calls for more answers:

> If there is a need for Innocence to be reformulated as Eden rather than Eden/Ntswanatsatsi, then it does not point to a total abandonment of Basotho traditions, which are now equated with sin. This is where Mofolo leaves us with questions, in terms of his own philosophy, for which it is very unlikely we shall ever find the answers (ibid.).

This ironic feature, which raises a number of questions in *Moeti,* is still dominant in *Pitseng* as will be demonstrated later. One can only draw on this the assumption that once the Basotho were made to believe that their traditional practices were evil and that their religion was pagan, they would easily turn to Christianity. However, it emerges from Mofolo's portrayal that Christianity was not in itself the only factor that could turn the Basotho into accepting the Christian faith.

Traditional lore, especially the legend *Moshanyana wa Senkatana*, which I prefer to call a myth, could be regarded as one of the factors (cf. Swanepoel, 1989:123). There are similarities between the life of the hero, Senkatana, and Jesus Christ from which one could draw parallels, especially on the question of redemption. Senkatana, on the one hand, saves his people from the belly of a monster, Kgodumodumo. On the other hand Jesus Christ saved God's people from the grip of sin. In this context Senkatana turns out to resemble Christ while Kgodumodumo (or Kammapa in the other version of the same story) resemble sin or Satan (cf. Swanepoel, 1989:122).

According to Swanepoel (ibid.) Casalis came to a similar conclusion where he asked whether this tale is "a confused tradition of the redemption of man wrought by Jesus Christ". This perception was also corroborated and expounded later by elderly men in the valley of Roma. Guma (1967:9) says in this regard:

> According to them, the snake in the garden of Eden is the Kgodumodumo, which they also equate with sin; the sole woman survivor who bore

> Senkatana, is the virgin Mary, and Senkatana himself, the slayer of the Kgodumodumo, i.e. sin, is Jesus Christ.

Mofokeng's dramatisation of *Moshanyana wa Senkatana* as *Senkatana* (1952) lends more credence to Guma's analogy. Mofokeng translates the permanent symbolism of the strife between sin (snake) and salvation (Jesus Christ) into a permanent feature of humanity characterised by the strife between good and evil. Therefore the metaphorical use of Kgodumodumo as vice, and Sankatana as virtue can no longer be limited to time and space. It becomes in the first instance a universal human phenomenon, which only secondly, can at one time or another acquire different contexts. This being the case, then one would argue that the notion of universal salvation (through Jesus Christ) was already known to the Basotho prior to the arrival of the missionaries in Lesotho.

Setiloane (1986) sees, in addition to the tale of *Moshanyana wa Senkatana*, other folklore narratives, which might have made Christianity easily acceptable among the Basotho. He cites the tale of *Masilo le Masilonyana* as representing the biblical stories of Cain and Abel, and Esau and Jacob in the Old Testament (op. cit. p.2). Setiloane regards these stories, like the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, as myths on which Judaism, partly the predecessor of Christianity, is based (op. cit. p.3).

These assumptions make a compelling argument to dispute the notion that the Basotho were indeed a pagan nation (a people who do not know God), until the arrival of missionaries. Setiloane argues from this perspective that those missionaries did not necessarily introduce Christianity among Africans, because a similar religion was already in existence. What they introduced is Western Christianity through the capitalist mould of production – and its attendant liberal ideology, which was masked by the so-called Western civilisation.

In fact, according to Setiloane, westerners did not even originate Christianity. They merely popularised it through a programme of massive colonisation of undeveloped countries, which include Africa. Westerners received Christianity from Arab nations some of whom resided in Africa. Therefore Africans should

have been among the first nations to receive Christianity. There are a few historical instances, which lend weight to this argument.

For instance, immediately after his birth, Jesus Christ and His parents fled to Egypt, an African country (cf. Matthew chapter 2, verse 13). Furthermore, during one of his pilgrimages, St Paul met and baptised Candace, an African from Ethiopia, who was the eunuch and a chief authority of the Ethiopian queen (cf. Acts 9:6). Therefore if Africans did migrate from around central Africa, as history purports, this could possibly explain the origin of the legend, *Moshanyana wa Senkatana* from. In fact according to Swanepoel (1989:122) it belongs to the realm of myths, and almost all religions have their origin in mythology[1]. It has further been established that this myth is not only found among the Basotho, but among other Southern African nations as well[2].

It is therefore not a coincidence that Mofolo, in his portrayal of the understanding of the Christian God, contradicts the understanding of a God most of the Basotho people knew and understood. However, as a commissioned artist, he had to project the conception of God from the perspective of the missionaries because that was dictated by the circumstances under which he wrote *Moeti*. Western Christianity was an important commodity, which had to be sold in order to enable the missionaries, misrepresent and subsequently denigrate the culture of the Basotho. Unless that happened, missionary work would have been a mere confirmation of what the Basotho already knew. Consequently, missionary would have turned out to be a futile exercise. To illustrate the essence of this assumption we could cite the following statement from Alice Werner's review of *Moeti*:

> This picture of tribal life strikes one as unduly black, but perhaps the shadows have been deepened, half or quite consciously for artistic reasons. Moreover, one finds that native converts, flushed with the joy of enlightenment and progress, are apt to exaggerate the evils of their former

---

[1] Cf *Great People of Faith and Wisdom* 1984 The Reader's Digest Association of South Africa (Pty) Ltd.

[2] See Foreword to *Senkatana* by SM Mofokeng.

state and overlook its better features; they want, like most young and enthusiastic reformers, to scrap the past wholesale (Kunene, 1989:82).

In a similar manner, Mofolo portrays the resolve that Fekisi displays in his search of the true God as one of the virtues, if not the only one, which people must aspire for. The cardinal message in this Christianity doctrine is that, in spite of the price one has to pay, the most important reward is the eternal peace an individual will find with God. All the trying circumstances through which Mofolo puts Fekisi: hunger, pain and thirst; illustrate a kind of resolve a Christian must have. The pain and suffering belong to this world, beyond which lies eternal peace. As Mofolo concludes:

> Yare moo phutheho e ikgurumollang difahleho, baruti ba atamela aletareng ka tshabo e kgolo. Ba fumana Fekisi a leletse hodimo, mohodi o se o le siyo, sefahleho sa hae se tletse thabo, nyakallo, kgotso, kgotso ya motho ya fumaneng Mora wa motho (p.75).
>
> (When the congregation removed veils from their faces, the ministers approached the altar with great fear. They found Fekisi lying face-up, the mist was gone, his face was filled with joy, delight, peace, the peace of a person who has met the Son of man).

Another obvious contradiction in this portrayal, which has also posed a problem to many Basotho - Christians included, is that it presents God as if He has withdrawn forever from mankind and does not care about their everyday life. The Basotho's understanding of God is that He is presently caring and providing for them. Hence their references to God as *Tlatlamatjholo* and *Rasefabatho*. It is for this reason that they would periodically celebrate God's providence following any success, recovery or escape from any looming disaster through the popular *phabadimo* (ancestral feasts).

This argument about perceptual contradictions does not, however, suggest that Christianity was wrong and had to be rejected out of hand. Two trends of development could be anticipated. The first is that a scenario would emerge where

the Basotho would develop into distinct social groups or classes on the basis of perceptual or ideological differences, as will be illustrated later in the case of *Pitseng*. Secondly, it could be anticipated that Christianity would eventually undergo a form of change that would characterise a unified society in which it functioned as an accepted social institution.

4.3.1.2 Perspectives on Pitseng (Mofolo)

In *Pitseng*, Mofolo portrays a situation where Christianity had found root among the Basotho to an extent where there were already established mission schools, churches and practising Christian converts in some areas of Lesotho. Pitseng, where the story is set, is one of the remaining areas, which has not yet come under the Christian influence. This isolation of Pitseng, both literally and figuratively, from other areas of Lesotho serves a valuable purpose of making Christianity a necessity, in this community, as Kunene (1989:88) observes:

> Pitseng is totally isolated from the western lowlands of Lesotho and also from the changes brought there by the missionaries through the school and the church.

In a literal sense the physical distance means that Pitseng lies far from the areas in which missionaries were working, such as Morija and hence could not be reached immediately. In a figurative sense distance implies that Pitseng is far from civilisation, hence its communities remain primitive. Therefore the two senses which reflect the isolation of Pitseng are used, are central to the theme of this novel. This means that in the first instance it would required that a trip be undertaken to bring civilisation to Pitseng. Secondly, it means undertaking a spiritual pilgrimage to bring civilisation to Pitseng. Kunene (1989:91) interprets these images as also reflecting the personalities of Alfred and Aria. He says:

> ... the journeys they take is that their own personalities are on trial, their own ability to withstand the buffeting winds of the life of young adolescent man or woman who is constantly being exposed to temptation to join in the melee.

Therefore the one significance of portraying contrasting images between Christian and non-Christian communities enables Mofolo to pursue his theme of darkness (evil) versus light (good), which started with *Moeti*, further. In *Pitseng* Mofolo does this by exploring the true virtue of love, which was hitherto being abused by both young and old, through his characters Aria Sebaka and Alfred Phakoe.

Mofolo starts by describing the beautiful landscape of Pitseng with its flocks and herds of livestock as well as out-laying fields and villages. This beauty, he also extends to personalities of Alfred and Aria. That is why all the girls had their eyes on Alfred and all the boys had theirs on Aria, respectively. Evidently Mofolo expects the natural beauty of these two to be supplemented by good human life which in his view is non-existent.

This unenviable contrast between nature and human life makes the need for decisive intervention to correct human life inevitable, so that there could be harmony between the two. That harmony, in Mofolo's view, can only be brought about by christianising the people of Pitseng. For this task he assigns the teacher-cum-evangelist, Mr Katse, who is emulated later by his school products, Aria Sebaka and Alfred Phakoe. Mofolo makes this ideal very explicit in the following paragraph, which reflects the imminent dawn of the era of enlightenment at Pitseng:

> ... wa Pitseng ya fumanehileng o ne a le lekgatheng la ho fumana leruo le leholo; wa Pitseng ya hlorang o ne a le lekgatheng la ho tshediseha; wa Pitseng ya ntseng a le lefifing o ne a le lekgatheng la ho tjhabelwa ke lesedi, hobane bosiu boo bo ne bo se bo le lekgatheng la ho sa; dikgoho di ne di se di lekile la bobedi, kapa la boraro; Mphatlalatsane, naledi ya meso e se e le hodimo; tjhe, re ka re mafube a se a hlahile, metjhaedi ya mahlasedi a letsatsi la hosasa a se a hlahile, mme mehla ya lefifi le bothoto bo boholo e se e feta, tjhe, ha re sa e bona; [...] (p.9).
>
> (... the poorest of Pitseng was about to receive great wealth; the one of Pitseng who was grieved was about to be consoled; the one of Pitseng who was in darkness was about to see light because the sun was about to

dawn; the fowls had already cried for the second or third time; the morning star was up in the sky; we can say it was sunrise, the rays of the sun are already visible, the days of extreme ignorance are passing by, we can no longer see them...)

Mofolo does not mince his words about the imminent dawn of civilisation at Pitseng. As in the case of *Moeti*, he does this by contrasting African tradition beliefs with Christian beliefs. However, much as Mofolo's intention is understood, his insertion of authorial ideology, nevertheless comes as a complete surprise. It is drawn from the African perspective of reality, because the people of Pitseng lived "in pristine innocence and in harmony with nature" (Kunene, 1989:88).

The other significance of this novel is that it illustrates a situation where more than one ISA are operating. As pointed out earlier, this further demonstrates the manner in which various social institutions are hierarchically linked to one another in servicing a particular dominant ideology (also cf. Simonse, 1982:456). We find in this instance a situation where education and religion function together to promote the so-called civilisation. In essence this civilisation is in fact an ideology of colonialism, to obliterate Basotho traditional institutions such as *lebollo* (initiation) and *sethepu* (polygamy).

As in the case of *Moeti*, Mofolo still uses the iniquitous Basotho traditional life as a launching pad for the function of his hero in the novel. However, in the case of *Pitseng* we find that Mr Katse, unlike Fekisi, operates under different conditions - the era of enlightenment in Lesotho. For instance in the opening paragraph of the second chapter he says:

Nako eo re ngolang ditaba tsa Pitseng ka yona, Lesotho e ne e le mehla ya tswelopele, Pitseng e sa ntsane e le mehla ya lefifi le letsho, la Sesotho sa kgale; Lesotho e ne e le mehla ya lesedi, Pitseng e sa ntsane e le mehla ya boholoholo; Lesotho e le mehla ya dikolo, Pitseng e sa ntsane e le mehla ya mabollo le ho tsamaela majwala; ke hore mehleng ya lesedi, bona ba ntse ba le lefifing la bothoto, ho bona bosiu ke motsheare (p.9).

(At the time of writing about developments at Pitseng, Lesotho was already in the era of enlightenment, while Pitseng was still in complete darkness of traditional Sesotho culture. Lesotho was in the era of civilisation while Pitseng was still stuck with old traditions. Lesotho was in the era of schools while Pitseng still remained in the era of initiation and drinking sprees. That is to say, during the era of enlightenment they were still in the darkness of ignorance, night was like day to them).

Clearly, in the case of *Pitseng*, unlike in *Moeti*, Christianity is no longer just an ideal but a reality, although the knowledge of this religion was not yet established at Pitseng. It is no longer just an external factor but it is an internal factor as well - an accepted social practice. Consequently, various members of society are affected differently and respond differently. It is no longer just Christian enlightenment against traditional ignorance. Groups or social classes, resulting from different perceptions and levels of social development, which form the basis of Mofolo's plot, had developed. It is the consequences of people's response to this scenario, which Mofolo portrays in this novel.

Mofolo portrays a situation where there is a measure of acceptance, knowledge and appreciation of both the church and the school in the Basotho society other members demonstrate tendencies to cling to tradition. This might not be a true picture of the society at the time but the mirror function of this novel seems to have been aimed at either creating or re-inforcing this perception. The following excerpt underlines this assumption:

Batho ba badumedi ba ne ba welwa mona Pitseng. Ka palo ba ne ba sa qete letsoho, mme ba phela habohloko haholo ke tsena tseo ba di bonang ka matsatsi ohle, le ke ho llela thuto, eo ba sa e fumaneng ka baka la bohole le moo diphutheho di leng teng, le ka lebaka la bana ba bona ba phelang bophoofolo, ka ntle ho thuto;(p.7).

(There were very few believers at Pitseng. Their number did not exceed five, and their life was made extremely difficult by what was happening around them daily. They were yearning for the education that they did not

receive because they were far away from established congregations and because of their children who lived like wild animals because they did not have an education).

What emerges also from this excerpt is the portrayal of a situation where social developments give rise to distinct social groups, either according to levels of developments or according to ideological leanings, as discussed above. There are those people who accept and embrace Christianity as well as those who stick to their tradition. However, the important point to note here is that, once such groupings develop into conscious social classes, conflict ensues and ultimately the whole society is transformed. The result is that a new society is formed. This does not, however, mean that the new society so formed takes the character of either of the formerly opposing classes. It becomes a completely different society. However, Mofolo neither portrays nor pursues this perception in his story.

Instead we find in *Pitseng* the ideal society which Mofolo anticipates epitomised by Aria Sebaka and Alfred Phakoe. It is a society of people who love and respect God, and truly love one another. In a sense, Mofolo portrays Mr Katse as a catalyst for social change while Aria and Alfred epitomise the product of such a change. Mofolo expects a learned, diligent and Christian society to emerge from the Basotho. All these are illustrated in the admirable values in the lives of Aria Sebaka and Alfred Phakoe. They love school, the church and lead a morally sound life. Because their life is guided by obedience to God, they are destined to lead a prosperous life after their marriage: "Ya fumaneng mosadi wa sebele o fumane lehlohonolo, o filwe mpho ya mohau ke Jehova" (p.173). (The one who has a true wife has received a blessing; he has a gift of grace from God).

Unlike in *Moeti wa Botjhabela*, where Fekisi did not receive and enjoy God's blessings while on earth, we find this happening to Mr Katse, in *Pitseng*, from the manner in which Aria and Alfred are blessed. In fact, through Fekisi, Mofolo exhibits exaggerated optimism of Christian virtue which borders on idealism and the solution to the problems faced by his hero are solved by co-incidences that are not convincing.

However, Mofolo tends to adopt a more realistic approach in the handling of his plot in *Pitseng*. We see his hero, Mr Katse, identifying problems within his society and embarking on a mission to solve them. Although the people of Pitseng are prosperous by African standards, Mofolo perceives this prosperity to be hollow because it only satisfies material needs. He therefore introduces Katse to solve this problem which Kunene (1989:89) describes as follows: "They are happy in an almost vulgar way. They are the children of nature who must be converted into the children of God."

In order to correct this anomalous situation this perception is followed by hard work in which Mr Katse toils to establish a church and a school amidst resistance from certain members of the Pitseng community. Says Kunene:

> The young preacher-and-teacher, Mr Katse, bearing the torch of civilisation from the enlightened areas, becomes a metaphor for the spiritual wealth that is coming to the people of Pitseng, as well as the sun that is about to rise and chase away darkness (op. cit.).

One would have expected Mofolo to adopt the same harsh approach as in *Moeti*. The one of creating an extremely evil society to make the intervention of Mr Katse necessary, especially around the understanding of God. However, in *Pitseng*, Mofolo's perception of God comes closer to that which the Basotho had initially held: a God who provides for his people while they are still on earth. He further demonstrates a measure of tolerance to certain Basotho traditional practices, which he had so harshly criticised and discredited in *Moeti*. In this way he makes it possible, not necessarily easy, for his hero, Mr Katse, to engender change within the Pitseng community.

One may consequently assume that on the one hand, this change of heart illustrates Mofolo's maturity in his writing and a better understanding of his new faith. Kunene (1989:88) also shares the same perception:

> ... despite an occasional lapse into words that equate the old ways of the Basotho with darkness and backwardness, which Mofolo constantly harps

on in *Moeti*, there is a marked difference in tone in his description of the old customs and traditional way of life in Pitseng before Katse's coming. The harshness is gone. It is a softer, more tolerant and more empathetic tone than that of *Moeti*.

On the other hand this change in Mofolo's approach vindicates the claim made earlier that if a society is polarised, a new society that would emerge from the resultant conflict between opposing groups will not be a carbon copy of either of the former grouping. It will instead be a new society, with its new values, which to some extent will exhibit some characteristics of both the former groups. Mofolo here seems to project himself as a product of that emerging society in Lesotho; hence his tolerant attitude towards the Basotho culture.

In the case of this novel it means that the emerging community of Pitseng, epitomised by Aria and Alfred, after exposure to Christianity, would neither be purely European nor remain purely African. It should, therefore, be understood that Mofolo's selection of the young Aria and Alfred as epitomes of civilisation is also strategic. It is not easy, on the one hand, to change old people from their old ways to which they so rigidly cling. It is rather easier, on the other hand, to influence younger people, who are still growing up, to adopt a new perspective of life.

In this instance Mofolo uses two opposing social institutions: It is the school and Christianity on the one hand, and *lebollo* (initiation) and tradition, on the other. Aria and Alfred have to make a choice between the two, and they choose the former. Mofolo's agent of change, Mr Katse, works tirelessly to have Aria and Alfred who are established in Christian values. Ultimately, Mofolo's moderate attitude towards Basotho traditions makes Aria and Alfred to emerge as models of a new society rather than merely as opponents of Basotho tradition. They display a bit of each of the cultures, and in this way Christianity becomes a tolerated religion among the Basotho.

It is therefore understandable why Mofolo chose this option because in reality the emerging community will be the one that would exhibit traces of both Christian and

African traditional cultures. This also further illustrates that Mofolo is more realistic in *Pitseng* than in *Moeti*. In the latter he was naively impulsive, perhaps as a result of pressure from the missionaries, to project a belief that anything African is evil and everything 'Christian' is therefore good. That is why in the latter he is more pragmatic, by not only exhibiting a better understanding of his faith, but by also finding something good in African tradition.

This realisation of Mofolo's pragmatism is further extended when we consider the manner in which he ends his book. The ending demonstrates that Mofolo has eventually accepted that God could reward his faithful servants while they are still physically present in this world. This understanding also coincides with the belief the Basotho have always had about their God. This was often revealed in their ancestral feasts (*phabadimo*) where they celebrated the blessings they have received. He writes as follows about the reward of a fulfilling marriage which Alfred and Aria have received as a blessing from their God, as well as the harmony Mofolo has been yearning for between nature and mankind:

> Botle ba naha le kganya ya yona, thabo ya dintho le dimela, Aria o e bone pele ho Alfred; mme yare ha a mo tadima, [...] a fihlela Alfred e ka mohlolo oo Modimo o iketseditseng wona (p.172).
>
> ...Alfred a utlwisisa hore letsatsi kganya ya lona e lokela ho hlaka haholo, ha motho a tadimane le ya jwalo ka enwa moratuwa wa hae. Aria a utlwisisa hore letsatsi kganya ya lona e lokela ho hlaka haholo, ha e wela sefahlehong sa eo kganya ya Mmopi e bonahalang ho yena, jwalo ka enwa moratuwa wa hae (p.173).
>
> (The beauty of the land with its light, the joy of things and plants, were beheld by Aria before Alfred; and when she looked at him, [...] she saw Alfred as a miracle God had created for Himself...
>
> ...Alfred understood that the sun's light has to be extremely bright when a person is looking at someone like his love. Aria understood that the sun's light has to be extremely bright when it strikes the face of the one who

reveals the Creator, the one like her love).

These two books, *Moeti* and *Pitseng* have a happy ending. The heroes in both the books are ultimately rewarded at the end of their toil. Meeting his God at the end of his long journey rewards Fekisi. Mr Katse, although he did not live to witness it, is rewarded through the fulfilling marriage his adored children and students, Aria Sebaka and Alfred Phakoe, enter into. Undoubtedly, this way of ending the books lends an optimistic view to religion: If one seeks God and faithfully obeys Him, one will be blessed with a divine reward.

4.3.2 A pessimistic view of religion

Both Mofolo's *Chaka* and Segoete's *Monono ke mohodi ke mouwane*, can be slotted in this category of a pessimistic view of religion. Neither of the two novels expresses human success as life's ultimate reward. Says Swanepoel (1979:66) with respect to Chaka:

> Although the fundamental idea is still religious, it is that of a religious option: between obedience and disobedience; between good and evil. It represents the idea of man exposed to evil.

The same could be said of *Monono* where man has to make a choice between wealth and God's ultimate peace – probably 'the peace that surpasses human understanding' in shallow Christianity. Consequently both these novels tend to create an impression that all human successes are of temporal nature. One of the interesting questions to explore in the study of these two novels is which of the two religions - Christianity or Traditional African religion, should be followed? Which religion seems most fulfilling and appealing, and hence more acceptable, among the Basotho in particular, and/or Africans in general. Related to this question is also the issue of ideological conflict between the two religions as observed in the novels. We shall now proceed to argue these questions from the perspectives of Mofolo's *Chaka* and Segoete's *Monono ke mohodi ke mouwane.*

4.3.2.1 Perspectives on Chaka (Mofolo)

Mofolo's third novel, *Chaka*, occupies a very special place in Sesotho literary history. Firstly, no sooner than it was published, after being delayed for over 17 years (cf. Kunene, 1989:144), did *Chaka* generate interest unequalled in the history of Sesotho literature in Lesotho. It was admired and condemned at one and the same time. Tekateka (1967), Moloi (1973) and Swanepoel (1993), among others, have given this debate sufficient coverage and their arguments will not be elaborated on individually in this study. Their inter-lapping and overlapping views will instead be used frequently to substantiate arguments made in the cause of this study.

Secondly, in spite of being written in the era where western Christianity was a dominant ideology of the epoch, *Chaka* is at variance with the other two novels by Mofolo. This variance is both aesthetic and ideological as will be demonstrated in the cause of this study. Consequently, the conception of *Chaka* by Mofolo as well as its interpretation by the reading community is considered to have a bearing on both the ideologies of the epoch as well as aesthetic flavour. From this position one would therefore assume that religious consciousness constitutes a principal factor in the author's handling of his material i.e. his choice of the theme, characters, milieu and the portrayal of events. The other aspect, which will be considered, will be the choice of the target audience by virtue of the language used by the author. This is irrespective of whether Mofolo, consciously or sub-consciously, adopted a particular ideological position or aesthetic leaning in the handling of his material.

Mofolo, by choice of his language, it can be assumed, intended to write for the Basotho community. In spite of this logic he however, chooses a setting and history that are remote from those of the Basotho. One would consequently expect that this choice would affect the manner in which Mofolo communicates his story. As a result, one is compelled to look beyond the confines of the Basotho culture for meaning and aesthetic pleasure of this text. It is in this context that the argument of ideological conflict between African and Western religions will be

viewed. It will be a consideration of the perspectives of Christian religion against African traditional religion, not necessarily the Basotho traditional religion against western Christianity. This phenomenon has the advantage of demonstrating similarities and dissimilarities between Africans and Westerners and among various African nationalities themselves. We shall firstly consider the setting of the story.

The setting of *Chaka* is in a typical traditional Zulu environment and what immediately emerges is the close link - which is inseparable, between religion and social life in the life of African communities. In the African context social formations (or ISAs) are so closely linked to one another to an extent that there is no obvious distinction among them. They are perceived collectively to constitute the broader African way of life – their collective socio-cultural experience, so to say. Therefore the very birth of Chaka is not merely a matter of culture. It also has related and deeper religious, political and social implications as well. Further, considering that in the African context, as will be illustrated, religion is not merely a cultural aspect but that it involves the entire human existence, the probing of this subject becomes even more crucial.

The scenario, which Mofolo sketches about the so-called tribal situation in South Africa at the beginning of his novel, attests to this fact. It is a diverse yet united set-up. So says Mofolo in the opening paragraph of his story:

> Lefatshe la South Africa ke hlohla e kgolo, e pakeng tsa mawatle a mabedi, lewatle la botjhabela le la bophirimela. Ditjhaba tse ahileng teng di ngata, ke tsa mefutafuta le dipuopuo; empa leha ho le jwalo di ikarola dikarolo tse kgolo tse tharo habonolo: ditjhaba tse sikang le lewatle la bophirimela di mmala o mosehla, ke Barwa, Bakgothu; tse hare ke Batswana, Basotho; tsa botjhabela ke Bakone, Matebele. Meedi ya tsona e meholo, e a bonahala, ke meedi e entsweng ke Modimo, e seng batho; hobane ba bophirimela ba arohantswe le ba hare ke mafella a maholo a mahlabathe, a hlokang metsi, mme ba hare ba arohantswe le ba botjhabela ke leloti le leholo, le phahameng, leo esaleng le tloha Koloni le ntse le nyolosa le sikile

le lewatle, empa holehole le lona. Empa phapang e kgolo hoo motho ya tlohang bophirimela a eya botjhabela, a hleng a ikutlwe, a be a bone hore o fihlile naheng esele le bathong basele, ha a fihla ditjhabeng tsa Basotho tse hare, mme ho be jwalo le ha a theohela ditjhabeng tsa Matebele ka nnqane ho loti (p.1).

(South Africa is a vast land, situated between two oceans, one in the east and the other in the west. It is populated by many nations, with different languages. In spite of this, they divide themselves into three large groups: the nations along the western coast are yellowish in colour, they are the San, the Khoikhoi; in the interior are the Batswana and the Basotho; in the east are the Nguni, the Ndebele. The boundaries are big and visible. They are boundaries that have been created by God, not human beings. Large deserts that have sand dunes and no water have separated the people in the west from those in the interior. Those in the interior have been separated from those in the east by a big high mountain range, which stretches from the Cape along, but far from the sea. But the difference is evident that a person travelling from the west immediately realises that he/she is in a different country, when he/ she meets with the Basotho in the interior, and likewise when one descends to the Ndebele on the other side of the mountain range.)

The foregoing quotation confirms the assumption that African views on religion about God cut across any perceived differences between social institutions and nationalities. God is omnipresent in nature, even the apparent spatial and ethnic/tribal differences among people that exist, do not exclude Him. God has in fact, designed such differences, and therefore He is eternally present within them to guide their destiny. The setting in *Chaka*, therefore, presupposes that whatever follows in the story will, in one way or another, ultimately reflect on the relationship between God and His creation, including mankind.

The hero of this novel, Chaka, which Mofolo creates, does not emerge in an ideal society created by God, or a naive one for that matter. Chaka is born within a

society that is affected and changed by human experiences and perceptions of the world. Therefore he becomes on the one hand a problematic hero as a result of the kind of society in which he finds himself. Says Simmonse (1982:455-456) citing Lukacs in this regard:

> Lukacs, for instance, associates the novel with a form of society in which the central value of the culture are no longer self-evident, in which humanity has become uprooted and has to find its way without the aid of pre-established orientation. In this social situation the novel is characterised by the problematic hero, in contrast to the epic hero who is non-problematic.

Such conditions where cultural values are no longer self-evident generally create circumstances, which give the context and meaning to the events surrounding the novel hero. Mofolo, in *Chaka*, contrasts an unspoiled self-sustaining natural environment with the decaying social environment:

> Boholo ba naha ena ya Bokone, yona e pakeng tsa Loti le lewatle, e kgurumeditswe ke meru; hape ha e bajwe, ho habolwa feela ka baka la ho ba haufi le lewatle; ke naha e talana, e makgulo a nonneng haholo; mobu ke seloko, mme hoo ho bolela dijo tse ngata; jwang ke seboku, tlanyane; metsi ke mekgwabo, mme hoo ho bolela hore kgomo ya teng e nona haholo; dinoka di teng, di ngata haholo, mme hoo ho bolela pula e ngata. Ke lefatshe la mehodi e meholo, e atisang ho tloha letsatsi le se le le hodimo, mme hoo ho bolela hore komello ha e eo, leswe le dieha ho fela (p.1-2).
>
> (The larger part of the land of the Nguni is between the mountain range and the ocean. The forests cover it and it does not wither in winter. it is affected slightly because it is close to the ocean. It is an evergreen country, with rich pastures, black soil, and this means plenty food. The grass is Themeda triandra and there are ample drinking places. This implies that the cattle in that area are fat because there are many rivers and that presupposes ample rain. It is a land of mist, which disappears late in the day, and this means that there is no drought, it is humid.)

However, immediately after the portrayal of this scenery, Mofolo demonstrates that, unlike the natural environment which is relatively good, things are not so well within the social environment:

> Hohle lefatsheng ha ho moo dintwa di hlokwang. Ho ba teng nako e nngwe eo ditjhaba di beng di tswelane dipelo, di dulele ho lwantshana, mohlomong di lwane dilemo, empa qetellong kgotso e boele e hlahe, naha e futhumale hape. Mohlomong ditjhaba di re di ituletse ka kgotso, ho hlahe ngwana e motona setjhabeng se seng, mme ngwana eo a le mong a ferekanye ditjhaba a le mong, kgotso e be siyo lefatsheng, a tsholle madi a mangata a ntse a le mong jwalo [...] Ditjhaba di ne di ituletse ka kgotso, se seng le se seng ha sona moo esaleng se le teng, ho tloha mohla Nkulunkulu a ntshang batho lehlakeng... (p.3-4).
>
> (There is no place in the world where there are no wars. There comes a time when nations become aggressive and attack one another. At times the wars last for a number of years but in the end peace is restored. Sometimes nations would be living peacefully and a young boy would be born among one of them. He would single handedly stir conflict, destroy peace and spill blood [...] There was peace amongst nations, each living in its own traditional land from the time God brought mankind from the reeds [...])

These two scenarios do not only provide the context in which the story will unfold but they further pre-empt its ultimate outcome - a distressing end. Swanepoel (1979:66) who observes that expresses similar views:

> In CHAKA...the traditional myth of creation definitely represents the state of harmony (CHAKA, 3-4). Already the birth of Chaka is a disturbance of that harmony,. His life pattern follows a negative direction.

Therefore the birth of Chaka, as will be demonstrated later, does not only have implications for the social environment but has implications for the natural environment as well. These environments, as portrayed by Mofolo, are not only

set to shape the character of the hero but are destined to demonstrate the impact of his actions on them as well. The religious ideology, which influences Mofolo, plays a very significant role in the portrayal of these two environments.

On the other hand, raising a related view, Ayivor (1997:56) argues that the portrayal of Chaka in the conflicting environments is typical of the portrayal of the hero in the African epic:

> African oral epics are often structured around two anti-thetical discourses. The discourse of glorification is devoted to exalting the image of the epic hero, while that of vilification is attuned to denigrating the villains, who are always the epic hero's arch-enemies.

In the case of *Chaka* we find this pattern co-existing at two levels. On the one level the glorification of the epic hero and the vilification of his arch-enemies is between Chaka and his half-brothers. On the other level such a pattern is contained within Chaka's own personality. He turns out to be both a hero and a villain in the same story. This pattern of the hero versus villain portrayal, as well as Chaka's dual personality, evidently constitutes the basic structure of Mofolo's novel. Citing Scheub, Ayivor also argues that "the African epic is developed within a network of praise songs: Weaving through the entirety of actions of the epic is a panegyric pattern providing the work's primary structure" (op. cit.).

Ayivor further interprets the portrayal of Chaka in the mould of hero *versus* villain as representing two layers of the story. The first layer is the positive reaction towards Chaka's enigmatic deeds enshrined in his heroic achievements. The surface meaning of this level is that it tends to unite society around the positive reaction Chaka receives. However, this layer is followed immediately by questions about the future of Chaka's exploits that tend to negate his benevolent deeds. Ayivor interprets this layer as a sign of division in society wrought by Chaka's heroic deeds. Of significance as well in the interpretation of Chaka's portrayal is the fact that, it also has bearing on the religious conflict between African religion and Christianity.

4.3.2.2 Christianity versus African religion in dealing with impurity

According to Christian principles any child is conceived and born in sin because of the legacy of Adam and Eve (Gen.3). In order to be cleansed of this sin every child should be baptised. On the other hand, in African tradition a person is cleansed after a misfortune or for protection against possible evil instigated by the manipulation of supernatural forces. Such cleansing is often coupled with strengthening by a reputable medicine man or woman. Cleansing and protection may also be sought after breaking certain rules that may incur the wrath of the ancestors or spirits.

In one of the foregoing quotations, especially the one describing the Southern African landscape, Mofolo seems to suggest that Nkulunkulu (God) has designed a certain order of things in the creation. By implication, if that order is disturbed through wrong doing, it could spell disaster for people linked to any form of doing wrong. Mofolo places Chaka's portrayal within such a context where his fate could also depend on factors outside himself. Hence the need for cleansing and strengthening.

The divine order of things in which Chaka is placed, creates, as a result, conditions in which the novel hero could be looked at and conceptualised. This order tends also to determine the manner in which Mofolo handles the theme of his novel. Kunene (1989:108) rightly observes as follows in this regard:

> Firstly, the story of Chaka is the story of a historical figure of some renown, who lived in a specific time, at a specific place, and who left his mark on history. This immediately imposes on the author certain restrictions, as well as moral and ethical considerations, which do not obtain in works of pure fiction such as *Moeti* and *Pitseng*.

In *Chaka*, Mofolo is faced with a daunting task of avoiding a deliberate distortion of historical facts while giving his work a fictional character. He gives the real setting - places of the traditional Zululand; uses the real names of Chaka's tribe, parents and sibling; surrounding tribes as well as some of the documented

historical events (cf. Kunene,1989:109-10).

Placing historical facts and his evident admiration of Chaka aside, we need also to consider Mofolo's real motivation for writing the book. There is no doubt that Mofolo's strongest motivation is, as is the case in his other two books, religious – not necessarily Christian, morals and ethical values. He tries, also in this case, to demonstrate how mankind tries to find purpose in life. In the process of finding this purpose mankind either follows the Divine will or falls into wrongdoing. As in his other two novels, Mofolo does this by contrasting African traditional values with Christian values. Says Kunene (1989:110) in this regard:

> The strong motivation to action in this book arises from both traditional African and Christian values. The traditional African, Senzangakhona, is unhappy because, though he already has 'three or four' wives, none of them has borne him a son, and therefore he faces the prospect of dying without an heir. Senzangakhona's answer to this dilemma is to marry another woman and hope that she will bear him a boy.

Evidently, Mofolo portrays this envisaged 'marriage' as the seeds of the conflict that would follow, which would ultimately lead to the tragic end of the hero. Here again the reward for good and punishment for evil cannot be mistaken: Christianity sanctions marriage to only one wife, therefore polygamy is sin, and the wages of sin is death. This scenario could further be considered to mean that if parents commit sins, according to the Christian doctrine, their children generally incur punishment for those sins.

To make this Christian judgement look crude, Mofolo also conveniently ignores certain African practices. In the African tradition there are mechanisms of dealing with extra-marital relationships, especially if the king is involved. In African tradition the king is above the law. As a result, Senzangakhona should naturally not be accused by society, let alone his wives, for any wrong doing regarding his involvement with Nandi. However, Mofolo ignores this socially accepted provision and instead applies crude Christian standards. Consequently, the impregnation of Nandi by Senzangakhona becomes a social scandal. Subsequently,

Senzangakhona's elder wives exploit the fact that Nandi's months did not reach the number of months normally taken by a woman before delivery. The elder wives find, as a result, reasons to blackmail Senzangakhona from this unusual development (cf. Kunene, 1989:111).

While there are obvious ideological contradictions between how Mofolo portrays what is in the novel, as against what is a normal practice in African tradition *vis-a-vis* Christianity, he succeeds in creating a situation which immediately places his hero into the centre of events. Chaka is perceived as a child born out of the wedlock and therefore cannot be a legitimate heir to Senzangakhona's throne. The events of the story immediately focus on how Chaka deals with his illegitimate status, in relation to his and his father's aspirations for his succession to the throne. From this point onwards Mofolo is faced with a task of demonstrating that what is morally wrong cannot be rewarded but has to be punished.

Ayivor (1997:59) shares similar views on his argument about Chaka's legendary heroic image *vis-à-vis* his villain image. He says:

> We can only assume that Chaka's legendary and heroic grandeur is deliberately inflated by the author for an eventual catastrophic deflation and demolition through the inevitable ascendancy of the anti-traditional voice of deglorification.

These sentiments are fully captured, in a form of foreshadowing, in the following utterances after Chaka has rescued Mfokazana's girlfriend from a hyena:

> Batho ba ferekana mehopolo ke thabo, empa thabo e kopaneng le dihlong; ba ipotsa ba hloletswe hore na ditaba tsa Chaka di tla fella kae ka botle, bokgabane, le ho roriseha ha tsona; le batjha le bona ba ipotsa ka maswabi, ka dihlong hore na Chaka o tla ba theola ho fella kae, ha dihlong tsa bona di ntse di kallana hodimo jwalo; maoba a tswa bolaya tau ba balehile, mme e le mona kajeno a bolaile phiri e nkile motho hara bona, mme ho hlokahetse ya phallang (p.30).
>
> (People became confused with joy, a joy that was mixed shame; they

asked themselves, with much astonishment, how far were Chaka's deeds going to go in their beauty, nobility and praise-worthiness. The young also asked themselves, with sadness and shame, how long was Chaka going to continue degrading them, because their feeling of unworthiness kept growing. Just a few days before he had killed a lion after they had all run away, and today he killed a hyena that had run off with a person right from their midst with no one ready to go to rescue.)

The doubts expressed about how far would Chaka's heroism go, albeit with mixed feelings, is an indication of the author's intention to predict the hero's impending demise. However, Mofolo does not make this prediction easy as he complicates it with the introduction of the possibilities of Chaka's unassailability, impunity and the effects ritual cleansing could have on him.

The manner in which the problem of Chaka's impurity is dealt with in the novel is intriguing. While from the Christian perspective it can be considered as a consequence of sin, in the traditional way it is perceived to be a result of impurity either caused or inflicted by people. These differences already presuppose the manner in which Chaka's problem will be dealt with. The cultural context in which Chaka was born and brought up, principally account for the manner in which his problem is perceived and dealt with.

The issue of Chaka's illegitimacy, for instance, creates natural enemies for both himself and his mother, Nandi. These enemies who are Senzangakhona's elder wives and Chaka's half-brothers also get backing from a substantial number of members of the tribe. Chaka is disliked and hated by his peers and is ultimately forsaken by his father (Chaka, 32-33). Such problems are hard to handle, let alone by an outcast like Chaka. They require an intervention by a supernatural force.

However, supernatural forces generally do not interact with impurities. Chaka by his very birth is not pure. That is why he is regarded as a child of evil who has to be destroyed (cf. Kunene, 1989:111). Faced with this problem Nandi engages the woman traditional healer who, apart from strengthening Chaka with medicines to protect him, also orders him to take an early morning bath at the river once a

month. This cleansing process could be interpreted as an effort to clean impurities within him as well as those that could be inflicted on him by his enemies.

Another important issue to note from this spectacle is that we see the evil human society turning Chaka to nature for help - he has to cleanse himself with natural water. The deeper meaning of this process signifies a belief among Africans that supernatural forces, whether evil or good, dwell in nature. The significance of this cleansing process is taken a step further when during one of his bathing sessions, Chaka meets *morena wa madiba* (the monster of the deep waters) (p.19-25).

In the Nguni culture a snake is regarded as a messenger, hence the servant, of the ancestors. Considering that the Nguni people, including Africans in general, revere ancestors, this cleansing acquires special significance for Chaka. He is also a being blessed by his ancestors; and blessings mean fortune and success. However, the traditional African interpretation of the cleansing process is also in preparation for processes of healing and/or strengthening because it is believed that medicines do not work on impurities.

Kunene (1989:111) spells out the function of this cleansing process, which he explains as follows:

> In order that Chaka should be able to withstand and repulse the onslaughts against him, he must maintain the highest level of purity from the effects of evil medicines and vile tricks of other people, which every one is exposed to in the ordinary routine of daily life.

This is a general belief, which is generally acceptable to Africans. However, the view expressed by Mofolo is that Chaka was not merely impure, in the African sense. He equates his impurities to sin. Consequently, "the religious issue in CHAKA is so complicated that it increases the danger of claiming that he was preoccupied by the concept of sin in the Christian sense" (Swanepoel, 1979:66).

This preoccupation underlies the manner in which Mofolo portrays characters and events which in his view manifest sin such as *morena wa madiba*, Malunga, Ndlebe, Isanusi and the vision of the slaying of people in *Donga luka Tatiyana*.

They are all described in chilling tones, which demonstrate disgust and condemnation rather than fear. In such description Mofolo exploits the biblical metaphor of the war between good and evil to pave the way leading to Chaka's ultimate demise.

After the cleansing process, action quickens, with Chaka's character transforming proportionately. The news about the impending encounter with *isanusi* (fortune-teller) reaches Chaka and Nandi via a messenger. Thereafter Chaka kills a hyena and kills his half-brothers, Mfokazana and Dingana. These two were trying to eliminate Chaka by killing him so they could get fame and Senzangakhona's throne.

By the time of these events the situation has developed to such proportions that Senzangakhona could no longer handle them. He subsequently gives an order to have Chaka killed. After fighting a battle of his life, Chaka manages to escape into the nearby forest. Dingiswayo, who learns about Senzangakhona's actions, is angry with him and demands that he delivers Chaka to him alive.

While hiding in the forest and hearing loud screams of people and cries of animals from Zwide, Chaka is able to reflect on the recent events:

> Tsena kaofela di etsahetse ka baka la ka, athe ke sa le letlojwana, letetema; ho tla ba jwang mohla ke bang monna, ke nka borena? Ke sa tla iphetetsa mohla letsatsi leo la ka le tjhaba! (p.35).
>
> (All these happened because of me, but I am still a young boy; I can't imagine what it will be like when I ascend the throne. I am going to revenge myself when that time comes.)

Chaka's resolve is very clear here: He needs nothing less than vengeance to compensate for his childhood suffering. His ascendancy to the throne is merely a means to that end.

One day, in his flight, as Chaka is walking in a desolate land with scanty trees, the heat of the sun becomes unbearable. He lies beneath a tree and falls asleep. As

he wakes up, he sees a man beside him strangely looking at him. A promise of his impending encounter with the *isanusi* is fulfilled. He has met with his saviour, Isanusi.

Here we begin to see, in the African sense, a combination of supernatural forces and their agents (traditional medicines, ancestors, *inyangas* - traditional doctors) at work. While Africans view these forces with optimism - capable of determining man's fate, Mofolo casts a veil of pessimism over them. He sees them as forces of evil, interfering in God's purpose about man. Mofolo uses this dichotomy of perceptions between African beliefs and Christian doctrines to contrast good with evil.

Isanusi assures Chaka that things are not as bad as they seem to be. He assures him that those greater things than he has expected await him. Observes Kunene (1989:123) in this instance:

> Isanusi's role is to confirm that Chaka's choice, or his decision, is right, but never to enunciate it himself. With carefully chosen words he guides, prompts, insinuates, cues, but never states explicitly [...] He thus plants in Chaka's head that there are greater things to strive for, but without actually saying so. Chaka immediately takes the cue and responds enthusiastically that, if there is a greater kingship than his father's, of course he wants it.

To win Chaka's confidence completely, Isanusi begins by accurately enunciating the recent events that led him to flee from his father's kraal. He then turns to issues that pertain to Chaka specifically:

> ...ke tla o bolella tabanyana e tsejwang ke wena feela. Moriring wa hao wa tlopo moriana o teng, ke wa mahlohonolo, wa borena. Ha o kgweletsa ke bone, nna ya bonang, ka ba ka lemoha, nna mohlalefi, hore o se o kile wa etelwa ke morena e moholo ya tswang ho ba ileng, ba hodimo, mme morena eo a o thabela haholo (p.39).
>
> (...I'll tell you something that is known only by you. There is medicine beneath your front hair, a medicine of luck, of kingship. When you adjusted

your blanket, I saw, who can see, and beheld, I the wise, that you were once visited by a great king who comes from the departed, the ones above, and he was pleased to meet you).

Perplexed by these revelations, Chaka's trust in Isanusi cannot be questioned. Isanusi then makes his mission of helping the persecuted, the downtrodden and the ones who cannot realise their ambitions clear to Chaka. Without allowing much time in-between, Isanusi makes Chaka an offer. This lucrative offer is, however, not without conditions attached to it. Firstly, Chaka has to confirm his resolve to aspire for greater kingship. Secondly, he should promise to obey the difficult instructions accompanying the offer. Chaka responds positively, and after reassuring him again, Isanusi administers the relevant medicines on him.

By analogy, one gets an impression that in the portrayal of this scene, Mofolo's motivation is the biblical scene of the temptation of Jesus Christ by the devil (Matthew 4:1-11). The devil promised Christ the kingdoms of the world on condition that he knelt down and prayed him. The obvious contrast here is that while Christ refused the offer, Chaka accept it with all the attached conditions.

Using his frame of mind about sinful human endeavours, Mofolo carriers us to the non-fulfilment of promises stemming from agents of evil. Mofolo uses as a trump card, one specific condition. The condition is that Chaka's spear should never be dry. It must remain wet with blood. Among the medicines Isanusi administers, there is *moriana wa madi, wa polao* (medicine of blood, of death) (p.43). Mofolo does not mince his words about what he perceives as Chaka's wrong choice; "Chaka o ikgethetse lefu bakeng sa bophelo ka boomo" (Chaka has deliberately chosen death instead of life) (p.43). From here follows a number of chilling events as Mofolo sets Chaka on a path to self-destruction.

Mofolo begins by setting Chaka on a trail of triumphant exploits; killing a lunatic, defeating and capturing Zwide, inheriting his father's throne and ultimately Dingiswayo's after the latter was beheaded by Zwide. In all these exploits Isanusi's aids, Ndlebe and Malunga support Chaka. These achievements culminate in Chaka transforming his state into a strong Zulu kingdom, a name he

coins from the rumble of thunder. Neighbouring tribes subsequently fear him the same way they fear the rumble of thunder. However, Mofolo tends to ascribe Chaka's rise in stature to a temporary effect of magic rather than a divine design.

4.3.2.3 Magic as a wrong solution to human problems

Mofolo makes a strong argument relating to whether magic is indeed the ultimate solution to human problems. He implicitly contrasts magic with the power of God who holds the destiny of mankind. This argument becomes clear in Mofolo's portrayal of Chaka's rise and fall. He tends to relegate Chaka's heroism to unfulfilling magical power rather to fulfilling virtuous achievement.

The power and popularity, which Chaka has acquired through magic, is expected to give him the ultimate reward of his life. He is expected to be content with all his achievements but Chaka's life has been so transformed that he has lost all humanity. He endows himself as the life standard and things are right or wrong because he wishes them. Mofolo at this stage introduces the aspect of the 'emptiness' of human achievements, and events take a dramatic turn. This change is also manifest in the manner in which society looks at Chaka. Hence observes Ayivor (1997:63):

> The praise songs addressed to Chaka after his installation are essentially different from the songs dedicated to him when he kills the lion, the hyena, and the mad giant. Instead of the antithetical voices of overt exaltation and veiled vilification fighting each other for supremacy, we now have an unambiguous and persistent voice that maintains that praise singing has been institutionalized by King Chaka to satisfy his hunger for flattery and self-deification and megalomania.

Contrary to the expectations that Chaka should now feel satisfied with his achievements, he begins to feel more and more emptiness inside. In Mofolo's view it is the emptiness that can only be filled by God's spirit but Chaka is not aware.

To compensate his emptiness Chaka embarks on a destructive mission, which culminates in his own destruction. He kills his wife, Noliwa, kills cowards and

annihilates neighbouring and distant tribes in the process which came to be popularly known as *Difaqane* among the Basotho tribes or *Mfecane* among the Nguni tribes. Even his own warriors such as Nongogo and Mnyamane become victims of his spear.

Chaka is by now the proverbial 'king of kings', feared and honoured by his compatriots, friends and enemies alike. He has raised the largest ever known army in human history. Yet his thirst cannot be quenched. Then he plans a great feast and in the process Chaka maims people for no apparent reason. Mofolo says Chaka is happy and is able to eat after this tragic event (p.152). His happiness is, however, short-lived. Like the biblical Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezar, the writing for his impending doom is on the wall. During this difficult period neither Malunga nor Ndlebe are available to assist him as usual. They have disappeared into thin air. Even Isanusi appears only when he comes to demand his payment from Chaka. The supernatural powers with which they are identified, which Chaka has entrusted his life in, have also disappeared with them.

Mofolo does not, however, leave Chaka's doom to fate. He makes him to confront his own actions by visiting ugly dreams to him. They haunt him like they did to Lady Macbeth, in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. This last part of Chaka's life can be understood as an illustration of the biblical meaning of a conscience, a human element introduced by God to man which helps him to distinguish between right and wrong, or in this sense, between good and evil.

In order to escape this problem, Chaka takes with him the Dinotshi and MaChaka regiments to Dukuza. By then Dingana and Mhlangana have become aware of Chaka's waning popularity and they prepare to strike when the opportunity presents itself. Chaka's condition forces him to isolate himself from his regiments - the rest of the people. Afterall his character disqualifies him from being regarded as a human being. He can at best be described as a devil. To illustrate this Mofolo creates vision of Donga lukaTatiyana, a metaphor of hell, with Chaka epitomising the devil himself. Isanusi appears again in this dream demanding his payment.

The dawn of the following day finds Chaka also deserted by his regiments.

Dingana and Mhlangana appear unexpectedly to him. Their presence seems to bring back a speckle of life in him. In the process of their conversation Dingana realises that Chaka is dazed and he signals to Mbopha and Mhlangana to descend on him with spears. However, his life ends with a prophetic warning, which dispels any hope of kingship his slayers might be having:

> Le mpolaya ka tshepo ya hore le tla ba marena ha ke shwele; athe le lahlehile, ha ho jwalo, hobane *mlungu* o a tla, mme ke yena ya tla le busa, lona le be bahlanka ba hae (p.163).
>
> (You kill me with the hope that you'll be kings after my death, but you are mistaken. That will not happen because the white man is coming to rule over you, and you'll be his servants).

The significance of this prophecy is of no consequence within the framework of this argument. It will therefore not be pursued any further. What emerges rather is that at the time of his death Chaka is a helpless and defenceless person. This state, though intended for a different purpose, is captured clearly by Mofolo in an earlier episode:

> Ya ema tau ya hlaka la ha Zulu, sebata se se nang tshabo, empa ya ema e feletswe ke matla, e sitwa le ho tsosa mohlahla. Ya ema tlou e kgolo, empa ya ema e theka, e feletswe ke matla, e fehelwa jwale ka kgomo ya lefu la mmamotohwane, le hona e bile e dihile ditsebe. Seemo sa hae se setle, le mahetla a hae a batsi, le ditho tsa hae tse boima, ka phokolo, ka ho rerekela, tsa hana ho etsa ka moo a ratang ka teng (p.160).
>
> (The lion of the cane fields of Zululand stood up, the fearless beast, he stood up bereft of his strength, unable even to raise its mane. The great elephant stood up, he stood up staggering, bereft of his strength, breathless like a scabby cow even his ears drooping. His large physic, his broad shoulders and heavy limbs gradually weakening under his weight, refusing to respond to his will.)

The evil aspect of his life has consumed his otherwise strong and admirable

physic. Only a hollow carcass bereft of the spirit is left. Therefore in winding up the end of Chaka we need to revisit the consequences humanity (social environment) can have on the natural environment if the two do not co-exist harmoniously.

Earlier we pointed out that Mofolo seems to be yearning for the harmonious co-existence between the two. In the beginning of the novel Mofolo portrays an extremely beautiful natural environment along the orderly social environment that he claims to be God's design. As anticipated, by the end of his life, the destruction caused by Chaka on the social environment has also made visible impact on the natural environment. Mofolo paints the scenario of the trails of Chaka's destruction the following manner:

> Ka pele ho makgotla a Chaka naha e ne e le ntle, e kgabile ka metse, ka masimo, le ka makgomo a mangata; empa mehlaleng ya makgotla ao e ne e le lehoko feela le se nang metse, le se nang masimo, le se nang makgomo, le se nang letho feela, ha e se dibatana tsa naha mohlomong. Makanyane, dithamahane, tsa tsamaya ka bongata di setse makgotla a Chaka morao, di seeleditse ka mathoko; moo a emisang le tsona di eme, ka ho tseba hore moo a yang di tla fumana dijo di sa ka tsa matha, tsa fufulelwa, di tla ja monakaladi wa kebolelwa. Naha ya hlwenya, ya eja boya, ya hlahafala; lefu la nkga fatshe la ba la nkga sebakeng. Masimo a lala, a hloka balemi, hobane hang ha motho a qala ho lema ke moo Chaka a mmonang teng, mme o tla anela ho lema; moo e neng e le metse ya eba dithakong, habo meritshana-swee (p.133).
>
> (Prior to Chaka's regiments the country was beautiful, decorated by villages, fields, and herds of cattle. However, in the tracks of those regiments remained a burnt out land bereft of villages, fields, cattle and everything else. Painted hyenas, brown hyenas, followed Chaka's regiments in large numbers. Wherever he rested they would rest, for they knew that wherever he went, they'd not sweat for their food. They'd readily get it. The country became wild and frightening because there was the stench of death everywhere. Fields lay unattended and there was no

ploughing for whenever anyone tried, Chaka would see him and that would be the last of him. Where there were villages, remained frightening ruins).

4.3.3 Conclusion

From whatever perspective one looks at *Chaka*, the futility of religion becomes evident. While Mofolo's intention seems to have been to demonstrate the futility of African beliefs, he has equally failed to demonstrate the value of the Christian faith. He has not been able to explicitly demonstrate the power of the Christian God in directing human destiny or at least intervening in their affairs. Therefore while he makes human efforts or African beliefs undesirable, he fails to make Christianity desirable either. The lack of enthusiastic emphasis on the latter could be regarded as another reasons that contributed to the rejection of his manuscript apart from its assumed heathen overtone. In fact, Mofolo does not necessarily glorify African beliefs in this novel. Rather, he attempts to demonstrate their futility. Therefore *Chaka* should largely be seen as casting a veil of pessimism on religion in general.

Consequently, to evaluate *Chaka* from a purely religious aspect would tend to cloud a number of issues. This observation then makes a theory of production a logical choice. Lukacs' study on the theory of the novel and Ayivor's study of *Chaka* from the perspective of the epic hero also re-inforce this perception. As demonstrated in the foregoing arguments, the intricate manner in which Mofolo portrays Chaka is based on intricate socio-cultural issues that can at best be unravelled via the theory of literary production. Consequently, religious issues that are discerned in the novel only form part of broader social issues.

4.4 Perspectives on *Monono ke mohodi, ke mouwane* (Segoete)

Segoete's novel, like Mofolo's three novels discussed above, has also been written during the period when religion was an ideology of the epoch. Therefore religious tone of Segoete's theme, whatever slant it takes, can therefore be assumed. There are, however, a few features that immediately strike the reader about this novel. Maake (1996:127) observes that *Monono* is "one of the few

Sesotho novels written from a narrator-protagonist point of view." Maphike (in Gerard, 1993:98) claims that "*Monono* has some bearing on Segoete's own experiences in the Cape." Tekateka (1967:6) also expresses a similar view:

> The writer narrates his own personal experiences and escapades while he was wandering in the Cape Colony; and **how ultimately he discovered faith that gave meaning to his life and was converted** (my emphasis).

One can therefore not hesitate to assume that in writing *Monono*, Segoete was indeed reflecting on his own life. This assumption is further underlined by what the author says in the preface as well as strong emotions, which characterise the tone of his narrative.

The latter part of the above quotation also reveals the author's purpose of writing the novel and he spends the whole preface of the book to explain it. In the preface Segoete spells out that his motivation for writing this novel whose title is also the theme, is based on the Sesotho proverb, `Monono ke mohodi, ke mouwane' (Wealth is fog, is vapour). Within this main theme Segoete also specifies the following four sub-themes which he hopes the novel will address:

- E bolela ho feta kapele ha maruo a lefatshe.
- Bophelo ba motho le bona bo a senyeha, mme qetello ya bona ke lefu.
- Bohlale ba motho, boo a lekang ho iphedisa ka bona, bo sitwa ho mmoloka mme bo mo hlahisetsa ditsietsi tse ngata.
- Bophelo ba nnete bo fumanwa ka tumelo ho Jesu ya bolayetsweng baetsadibe.
- (Material wealth does not last.
- Human life also gets spoiled, and its destiny is death.
- Wanton life, which a person leads in order to survive, does not last and often

create problems for him/her.

- True life is found in Jesus who was made ransom for the sinners).

The novel does, indeed, demonstrate that Segoete is trying to illustrate each of these themes to a certain extent. One also notes further that a common feature that binds all these sub-themes together is that they are based on Christian moral teachings. This is regardless of whether or not these moral teachings are correctly interpreted. To address the latter question it would perhaps be proper to examine the original meaning of the Sesotho proverb from which Segoete derives the title of his book *vis-a-vis* the theme(s) he seeks to address.

4.4.1 *The meaning of wealth in Monono*

Although there is not sufficient empirical data to prove the original meaning of this proverb, the popular opinion and interpretation is that *Monono ke mohodi, ke mouwane* is intended to warn wealthy people not to look down upon the less fortunate (cf. Sekese, 1973:69). This is largely because there is no guarantee that their fortune (wealth) will last forever. This opinion is further given substance by the practice of *mafisa* (lending), or related practices where the wealthy Mosotho would lend a cow to his less fortunate counter-part to look after. The period of lending is generally not specified but after the cow has given birth to a certain number of calves, the cow would be recalled - with some of the calves. This is done when there are indications that some of the calves, which have been left, can provide milk and increase the livestock of the man they were loaned to.

In a related practice, often called *ho lemisana* (ploughing together), a man who has a good span of oxen or large fields would assist the one who has less or none by entering into a kind of ploughing partnership. The less fortunate man benefits either from the use of oxen or from the crops yielded through that partnership.

Therefore whenever there is a wealthy person in a village who does not observe these or related practices this proverb is normally used to warn him. In its direct form the warning will often come in the form; '*Monna heso, o hopole hore monono ke mohodi, ke mouwane*' (My friend, you should be reminded that wealth is fog, is

mist). If addressed indirectly, especially to an unrepentant person, it would be phrased as; `*Mo leseng, hoba monono ke mohodi, ke mouwane*' (Leave him alone, for wealth is fog, is mist).

Another idiomatic expression which seems to support the opinion expressed above, is *Lekakalenyathedi la monna mosepedi, monna ha a hloke kgomo a ntse a phela, o tla be a e thole* (As long as a man lives, he'll eventually own cattle). It needs to be mentioned here that among the Basotho, livestock is not just a sign of wealth but that it also has a socio-cultural value. Livestock is used for *bohadi* (lobola) and in other cultural practices such as burials, initiation ceremonies, payment of traditional healers, ancestral feasts, etc. In other words, a Mosotho man could not lead a normal life if he did not have some form of livestock. Therefore it was necessary for each and every Mosotho man to have some livestock, especially cattle which in any way is wealth.

If we approach Segoete's *Monono* from this perspective, then there are obvious contradictions either in the use of the proverb or its interpretation. However, it would be cynical even to attempt to think that Segoete actually misunderstood the meaning of the proverb that forms the title of his novel. Such a possibility is dispelled by the fact that, over and above his education, Segoete was still raised up in a traditional Basotho community, where folklore constituted a basis for acceptable social practices.

There can therefore be only one reason why Segoete regards *monono* (wealth) as a distraction to meaningful life. Initially, Segoete seems not to share the sentiments of the Basotho who generally understood wealth in terms of livestock. He seems to be largely referring to monetary wealth as the ultimate form of wealth i.e. material affluence. In fact, this is the form of wealth he emphasises throughout his novel. This is clearly articulated when the hero, Kgitshane, speaks about his own wealth, Malebaleba's and Tim's. He does not speak about livestock as a form of wealth. Consequently, most of the `evils', which the hero highlights, are related to this form of wealth: stealing, cheating, and people not having time to pray God.

Segoete seems to have an unconcealed dislike for obsession with the

accumulation of the monetary wealth. He has therefore chosen to address this aspect of life, showing how money corrupts and how it is also worthless even to attempt to accumulate it. His reasons for this dislike seem, one may assume, to come from two sources or experiences. One could be from Bible teachings, for instance where Judas was given money to betray Jesus (cf. Matt.26v15 or respective texts in the other three Gospels). The other could be from his personal experiences, part of which is narrated in this novel: His attempts to accumulate money only brought misery to him. Another possibility could the attitude Segoete has on the principles governing the monetary wealth. Whatever the answer to this question could be, it seems to him money is, indeed, a root of all evil.

These assumptions then lead us in a particular direction, but following them slavishly could also lead to mere speculation. This is largely because neither can Segoete's comprehension of the Christian faith be quantified nor all his personal experiences be retrieved accurately. It seem therefore that to arrive at a better understanding of his theme and point of view, we need to firstly focus on the setting of his novel itself.

The setting of the story is in the period of enlightenment where religion was the ideology of the epoch as well as the emerging industrial economy. Segoete does not, however, concentrate on the educational and religious aspects of missionary work and its impact. He focuses on the economic aspect, hitherto ignored in Sesotho literature. His setting reveals an era where the Basotho could no longer depend entirely on subsistence farming. They were beginning to be absorbed into the emerging industrial era in Southern Africa. This development explains the aspects of colonialism, which was first introduced in Lesotho by the French missionaries and spread to other parts of Southern Africa, and Africa, through the expansion of other colonial settlements. Hence Owomoyela (quoted by Chinweizu et al, 1993:349) observation in explaining forms of colonialism; "France opted for assimilation, a system designed to transform her African subjects into Black French men and women."

France being an industrialised country (cf. Fowler & Smit,1973:132), the

missionaries also had, as part of their mission, to introduce the Basotho to the industrial life. One of the methods employed by the missionaries to effect this transformation was to create needs among Africans. This strategy of the broad missionary work is explained in the following article from *The Christian Express*, which was the mouthpiece of the Weslyan missionaries at Lovedale:

> The speediest way of creating needs among these people is to Christianise them. As they become Christianised, they will want more clothing, better houses, furniture, books, education for their children, and a hundred other things, which they do not have and never had. And all these things they can get by working, and only by working (quoted by Molteno in Kallaway, 1988:60).

Indeed, within the capitalist mode of production the only way to satisfy these needs was to leave subsistence farming to go and work for money. Seeing that Lesotho – like in other African communities, was not ideal for this kind of life, many Basotho men were later forced to leave their homes to go and work in parts of the present day South Africa. Segoete portrays, Kgitshane, the hero in this novel, as having left Lesotho to go and make a living in the Cape so he could satisfy his needs. Evidently, Segoete could have either been inspired by this phenomenon of monetary economy and/or his own experiences, as Tekateka and Maphike claim.

4.4.2 *The Christian perspective of wealth in Monono*

We have already argued that Segoete's focus is the worthlessness of the wealth of money. However, it is the link that Segoete illustrates between money and Christianity, which seems to be important. Segoete begins his story by introducing a wealthy young man, Tim, who cannot go to church as a result of obsession with wealth:

> Ho ya kerekeng ha a tsebe ho ya teng; a ka ya jwang, athe ho yena Sontaha ke letsatsi la phomolo ya mmele, ke lona letsatsi leo a paqamang ka lona; hape ke lona leo a balang leruo la tjhelete le dinku, mme ka baka

leo ho yena ba yang kerekeng ke batho ba botswa, ba se nang mosebetsi (p.1).

(He never goes to the church. How can he go because Sunday to him is the day for resting, it is the day for lying down; again it is the day for counting his money and sheep. For this reason to him only lazy people, who do not work, go to church).

Drawing from his personal experiences Kgitshane feels pity for Tim who seems to think that wealth is all that matters, something that one should devote one's entire life to. To him Tim is a lost soul that needs to be shown that the true meaning of life can only be found in Jesus Christ and not in wealth. As if by luck, Tim one day decides to approach this 'helpless' old man whom he sees everyday when he goes to his business. This encounter serves as a window through which Tim later experiences the old man and learns to know Kgitshane better:

Ka tsatsi le leng, ha Tim a feta, a mmona a itsosa fatshe ka thata, ditho di bohloko, a pheta polelo ya mehla: Re a tsofala, re a eletsa, koma re sala re di bina ka hlooho! - Mohlang oo Tim a mo atamela, a re: Ntatemoholo, ke hlola ke utlwa o bua polelo ena; na ke hore le wena o ne o ena le leruo botjheng ba hao? (p.1).

(One day as Tim was passing by he saw him struggling to raise himself up. His limbs were aching and he was repeating the usual statement: We grow old, we give counsel, we remain beholding things! On that day Tim approached him and said: Grandfather, I always hear this statement; does it mean that you were also wealthy in your early days?)

In responding to Tim's question, Kgitshane narrates a series of events in which he lost his entire wealth and the related consequences. In chapter one Kgitshane explains that he had accumulated a fortune of twenty-four pounds. In an attempt to accumulate more money, he lost his first wealth by purchasing a horse, a cart and its cargo for twenty pounds from a stranger in a certain village.

Kgitshane's business starts well and he is making a lot of money through his sales

until one evening when misfortune strikes. He is sitting with men at a *lekgotla*[3] (a gathering of men) at Mautse when he suddenly hears a whistle. The horse raises its ears and instantly gallops away in the direction of the whistle. After a futile chase he gives up and realises that it was a whistle of the former owner of the horse. Kgitshane is cheated. He is left with nothing except those things that are on his person. Kgitshane punctuates this experience with the biblical expression: *Se rateng lefatshe le tsohle tse ho lona* (Do not love the world and all that is in it) (p.2).

As a result of this event Kgitshane is also compelled to leave that village. While he was chasing his horse, he collided with a woman who was spilling away dirty water with which she was washing dishes. He is afraid that if the incident could be reported to the woman's kin, he may be sought and made to pay for his actions. So he leaves for another far away village where he could feel safe.

Chapter two explains how Kgitshane lost his second wealth. After losing his first wealth Kgitshane is left with five pounds. When he arrives at the village it is late in the evening and men are already leaving the *kgotla.* He is left with another stranger who is a 'trader'. Kgitshane asks him about his business. The trader replies by saying that the business is doing well but that there are good and bad days as well. Kgitshane becomes interested in the business and decides to start a similar business.

The following day Khitshane leaves for another village where he buys culinary utensils, linen and other items so as to increase the five pounds he has with him. His stock is stolen in the process of selling at Moemaneng village while he is reading a newspaper for potential buyers. Kgitshane again punctuates this experience with the biblical expression: *O behe letlotlo la hao lehodimong, moo ho seng tshwele le mashodu a fatang teng* (Place your treasure in heaven where

---

3

Lekgotla originally refers to a tribal assembly, but it is also used to refer to any gathering of men. The place of such a gathering is held is called **kgotla**.

there are no parasites and thieves to plunder it) (p.7).

In this incident Kgitshane again decides to leave the village as a result of mistrust and resentment he has for the people who stole his wealth. However, in spite of these setbacks Kgitshane is still bent on his resolve to increase his monetary wealth.

The third loss of Kgitshane's wealth is explained in chapter three. In the first two instances Kgitshane is relatively enjoying his business. We encounter him here for the first time complaining about his `luggage' as an unprofitable heavy burden: "*Boima boo ke bo jereng ka mahetla letsatsi lohle bo ne bo sa mpuseletse letho*". (The heavy burden I carried on my shoulders all day long did not benefit me) (p.11).

Kgitshane buys cups and pots with the reining money after meeting another hawker in that village. However, the realisation that he is now carrying a heavy unprofitable burden drives him to other neighbouring villages.

It is early in the evening when Kgitshane approaches one of the villages. He comes into encounter with a group of boys who are driving cattle and goats. After greeting him obediently, and enquiring about his goods, the boys offer to buy the whole stock. They agree on the price but the boys explain that because they are not going to use the pots, they'll practice `target shooting' with them, to establish who is the most accurate among them. After breaking all the pots, instead of giving Kgitshane his money, the boys flee away. Kgitshane ends this episode with direct words of exhortation to Tim: *Feela, ha ke bua tsena, ke hore o be o kgolwe hore ha re a tshwanela ho itshepisa ka letho lefatsheng* ... (I am saying these, for you to believe that we must not entrust anything to this world) (p.12).

The last of Kgitshane's wealth, which is explained in chapter four, is a shilling coin. He uses this shilling to buy fourteen boxes of matches with the intention to sell them after declining advice from Malebaleba and his group to engage in criminal acts.

Kgitshane has not slept well the previous night, so he decides to rest in a nearby

churchyard, in Grahamstown, where he falls asleep. Kgitshane interrupts his narration by telling Tim about *"tsa phomolo e nngwe ya lehodimo a reng o tla phomola teng; mme mahlomola a hae a tla feela"* (a certain heavenly rest where he will one day find rest, and all his miseries will be gone) (p.15). He is awoken in his sleep by a smell of smoke and burning fire. Some people who have seen him have burnt his boxes of matches and in the process Kgitshane's is burnt. Everything he has worked for is gone.

This foregoing episode is significant because it marks a turning point in Kgitshane's life. Up to this point he has only been robbed of his material possessions but now the attack is directed at his life. In the context of this study, the episode calls to question why it is desirable or not desirable to believe in God. In other words, it seeks to understand the notion of God's providence as expressed in Segoete's novel, as well as why and how are people encouraged to adopt or not to adopt the Christian faith.

4.4.3 *God's providence in Monono'*

The notion of God's providence holds that God provides for his people, especially the faithful ones. Up to the point where Kgitshane loses his last wealth, and beyond, he has been leading a reasonably honest life. One would have expected the author to demonstrate God's caring love for such a good person as an encouragement to his readers to adopt the Christian faith. Instead we see Segoete adopting an extreme position by subjecting the suffering of his hero, Kgitshane, to more pain for the simple reason that he does know God - the Christian God.

It would seem therefore that according to the author, it is only through suffering that man can be converted and to subsequently obey God. As a result, Kgitshane has his hand burnt. He is wrongfully imprisoned as a suspected accomplice in the murder in Grahamstown. He also loses his ear and subsequently his leg. As a result of the loss of his leg the opportunity to know God presents itself when he ultimately lands at Malebaleba's home. Malebaleba is an evangelist at Thuto village.

Malebaleba, who is a minor character in the story, plays an important role in the conversion of Kgitshane. He teaches Kgitshane about the salvation which mankind can find in God, through Jesus Christ. From then two things became pillars of Kgitshane's faith:

> Yaba ke a sokoloha; ka fumana Modimo, ka fumana kgotso ya letswalo. Ho fihlela kajeno ke ntse ke phela ka taba tseo tse pedi: **lerato leo Modimo o nthatileng ka lona, le tshabo eo ke tshabang Satane le menyaka yohle ya hae** (my emphasis).
>
> (Then I was converted, I found God, and I found peace of conscience. Up to this day my life depends on these two things: the love that God has for me, and the fear for Satan and his pleasure (p.80).

Kgitshane, the narrator-protagonist and hero of the novel, compares his life with that of biblical prodigal son (p.81). After leaving his home, together with his wealth, the prodigal son is still welcomed back into his home, after repentance, and leads a normal life. One would have expected Segoete to portray, like in the case of the prodigal son, a restoration of Kgitshane's life after conversion.

However, we do not encounter a similar change in Kgitshane's material life. He remains poor until his death. The only change in him is the inner peace and the hope that he'll get a similar hope in heaven. This seems to suggest, from the author's point of view, that material wealth is but nothing as long as one is at peace with God and assured that one would enter into the kingdom.

Kgitshane's life ends in chapter 21 with a vision. It ends in a similar in style like in Mofolo's *Moeti*. The messenger, an angel, is sent to call Kgitshane to heaven: *Morena wa hao o nthomile ho o bolella ho o lata, o be ho yena, o bone tsietsi tsa hao tsohle, mme kajeno o rata ho o lokolla ho tsona.* (My Lord had sent me to come and fetch you, He has seen all your miseries, and today he wants to free you from all of them) (p.88).

4.4.4 *Conclusion*

In the foregoing discussion we have tried to demonstrate whether or not Segoete has succeeded in making Christianity a desirable faith for people to participate in. While he has made wealth an obstacle to people to get involved in this faith, he has also not succeeded in demonstrating that the absence of wealth or lack of it leads to salvation and the immediate alleviation of human suffering.

Even in the case of Tim, Segoete demonstrates a similar notion that wealth is an obstacle in a God-man relationship. Tim is expected to divide his wealth among other people as a sign of conversion. The author does not say anything about the blessing which Tim, who has ultimately adopted the new name, Timothea, receives thereafter. The only non-material reward Timothea receives is the forgiveness of his sins. In this way Segoete's point of view lends a veil of pessimism on religion because in spite of his conversion, Kgitshane never experienced God's blessings on earth. His only hope is therefore a peaceful life, something, which cannot easily draw people to the Christian faith.

Finally, Segoete's motive to warn people not to devote their entire life to the accumulation of wealth is understood. He regards it as a wrong practice because wealthy people lack time to serve God and to care for others. According to his interpretation of the Christian doctrine, the wealthy have to distribute their wealth among the poor. The decision that Timothea makes to divide his wealth among the poor and the church (p.105-106), takes us back to the Basotho, practices of *mafisa* and *ho lemisana*, where people are helping one another to grow and develop together.

The difference here is that in the case of Timothea, it is work of charity to the poor, not mutual development. And by definition charity is akin to the capitalist world where handouts are made to sustain poverty and not to eliminate it in order to stimulate mutual development. Therefore, rightly or wrongly, Segoete seems, through his `theology' to be glorifying poverty and promoting handouts and charity as solution to human problems. However, this capitalist practice that is also akin of Calvinist spiritual salvation as opposed to total salvation, account for most evils characteristic of the modern world to date.

CHAPTER 5

THE INTERMEDIATE NOVEL (1930-1960): THE PERIOD OF GROWTH AND IDEOLOGICAL TURBULENCE

5.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to consider further developments in the Sesotho novel since its emergence. To achieve this the development of the Sesotho novel will be located within the broader development of Sesotho literature. The approach that is adopted here shall therefore take into account questions such as whether Sesotho literature in general, and the Sesotho novel in particular, has developed into a distinct literary tradition. Consequently, irrespective of the line of development Sesotho literature has taken, answers to the questions raised will be sought from the prevailing material conditions.

Such material conditions will be viewed from the broad thematic framework of Sesotho literature. A sample of selected novels will be used to illustrate some of the claims made in this study. In the process some of the traditional themes will either be re-interpreted or refined. The recent views on the development of Sesotho literature will be used as a starting point for the development of such an argument.

5.2 Some recent views on the development of Sesotho literature

Swanepoel et al (1994:101) refers to formative period of Sesotho literature (indefinite up to 1900) as *Tshimolohong* (The Beginning). He refers to the second period as *Mafube* (Dawn, 1930-1960). The period 1900-1930 is discussed in chapter four as the period of birth, nurturing and growth. The two initial periods identified by Swanepoel et al are viewed in this study as the periods of experimentation with Sesotho literature in general and the Sesotho novel in particular.

The period of birth, growth and nurturing (1900-1930), which is referred to by Swanepoel et al (op cit. p.101-103) as *Mafube* (Dawn), has special significance in

Sesotho literary history. It is considered as the period during which a firm foundation of Sesotho literature should have been laid down. Whether or not that foundation was indeed firm, is a question that will be answered in the course of this study. This period is considered further as a period during which the Sesotho novel should have developed a distinct character.

Therefore if we follow the meaning of **dawn** closely, we end up with a notion that dawn does not only mean the separation of two distinct times, for instance, **night** and **day**. Rather, it also means the advent of a **new era**. This new era could mean, in this case, the re-conceptualisation of the world from a different perspective in the Sesotho novel, which arises from a new ideology.

The new era, which is the objective of this chapter, is referred to by Swanepoel et al (1994:103) as *Le tjhabile* (It is noon). If noon implies that by noon everything becomes crystal clear, one would argue that by this period Sesotho literature should have assumed a distinct character. However, it needs to be emphasised that such a situation would obtain if Sesotho literature *per se* were used as a frame of reference. Definitely if other literatures were used as frames of reference, and even standards, then the situation will inevitably be different.

The premise of this thesis is, however, that Sesotho literature should be viewed as a literary tradition in its own right. This implies that Sesotho literature should not be viewed either as an appendage or extension of other literatures. Therefore *Le tjhabile* implies that Sesotho literature in general, and the novel in particular, had developed a distinct character by 1930-1960. That envisaged character of the Sesotho novel, with its attendant material conditions, therefore constitute the basis of the argument in this chapter.

5.3 The development of the Sesotho novel during the 'Le tjhabile' era

The period between 1930 and 1960 saw a number of significant changes taking place in both Lesotho and South Africa. Firstly, Lesotho, then called Basutoland Protectorate, had developed to remain a separate country from South Africa. This situation was consolidated when Lesotho was declared a British Protectorate in

1884. Lesotho had subsequently also resisted incorporation into South Africa when the latter became the Union of South Africa in 1910 (Webster's Family Encyclopaedia 1991:1512).

Secondly, the founding of the Union of South Africa in 1910 united the Afrikaner and the English. The founding of the Union was in fact the culmination of the shaping of white domination that was started by the signing of the Treaty of Vereeniging on 31 May 1902 (cf. Davenport,1991:201). This development, together with treaties signed with Lesotho, marked the beginning the ultimate exclusion of the African people and other races from government. It also led to the eventual political separation of the Basotho of Lesotho from those of the Union of South Africa, later called the Republic of South Africa since 31st May 1961 (Fowler & Smit, 1973:374). The Nationalist Party victory in the 1948 elections effectively consolidated this situation through in era of Social Engineering, started in 1948 and lasting up to 1960 (Davenport, 1991:327-45).

Thirdly, while on the one hand the Basotho of Lesotho were politically 'independent' from South Africa, they remained economically dependent on the latter as a result of reasons already discussed in chapter four. On the other hand, the Basotho of South Africa lived in a situation where they were both politically and economically subjugated over and above other forms of oppression and discrimination.

One would naturally expect different modes of consciousness to evolve from such disparate social conditions, thus leading to distinctive societies. On the contrary, it can be argued that the Basotho of Lesotho and those of South Africa still constitute the same linguistic and cultural group. In a similar manner it cannot be disputed that their different material conditions could have affected them differently. For instance, although Lesotho was then a British Protectorate where English was the official language of the ruling class, the Sesotho language was never legislated as an unofficial language. This implies that the missionaries and governors never seriously tempered with the advancement of Sesotho language since literacy was introduced in Lesotho. In South Africa, instead, Afrikaans and English were legislated to become the only official languages. This legislation made Sesotho, together with

other indigenous languages, technically unofficial thus limiting their advancement.

It can be expected therefore that such developments, in these two countries, should have affected the Basotho communities in the two countries to such an extent that they developed noticeable perceptual differences with regard to their world-view. Furthermore it would be expected that such developments would have had significant impact on both the production and the development of the Sesotho novel, as will be demonstrated in this and the next chapter. Such developments therefore tend to tempt one to adopt a separate examination of the Sesotho novels written by the Basotho of Lesotho and those written by the Basotho of South Africa. Says Gérard (1993:46) in this regard:

> It seems to be obvious *a priori* that differences in the historical and political contexts in those two Sotho communities must make for equally important differences in their imaginative writing. Lesotho has never been a crown colony but remained a protected territory [...] and since there has never been any large-scale white settlement, this country cannot have the same problems connected with *apartheid* and censorship, which inevitably beset Southern Sotho writers in the Republic.

This important observation, although it sounds logical theoretically, in reality it does not translate into an experiential fact. The acknowledgement of Gerard's assumption as an argument can create a climate in which interesting observations could be pondered with regard to "variations in inspiration and attitudes which besides orthography, are bound to establish interesting distinctions between those who live in Lesotho and those who live in the Republic..." (ibid.).

However, in the final analysis, such a distinction becomes a mere academic argument and consequently unnecessary because in practical terms, it neither accounts for the movement of some authors between the two countries nor their inspiration in the process. For instance, the works of authors such as Guma and Khaketla who spent their lives in both the countries, do not reflect any effect of different material conditions as a form of inspiration (cf. Ngcangca, 1989:25-28 & 51-56).

What Gerard's argument should propose, rather, should be to establish the ideology that underpins the work of a particular author in terms of prevailing material conditions irrespective of the geographic location. That is the ideology, which is nurtured by the Basotho culture, which culture bound them together in spite of geographic location. It is also the same culture, which was invariably subjected to Western influence that aimed either at its destruction or modification, that bound them together.

5.4 Material conditions affecting the Basotho between 1930 - 1960

Dismissing Gerard's argument, which claims different forms of inspirations with regard to the Basotho of Lesotho and those of South Africa without any substantial argument, has a potential of perpetuating wrong assumptions relating to the Basotho nation and hence their culture and literature. This position makes it expedient therefore to pursue Gerard's observation without dealing only with its shortcomings but by also establishing whether Sesotho literature does, indeed, consist of two distinct streams.

We shall, as a result, firstly deal with circumstances that tend to lend credibility to Gerard's observation and then proceed to argue why his argument is inaccurate, in favour of a view that espouses a unified character of Sesotho literature.

5.4.1 The state of material conditions in Lesotho

We have demonstrated in chapter four that the early Sesotho novel emerged from Lesotho under the guardianship of missionaries of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (PEMS). Further that, while the destabilisation of the Basotho social fabric was initiated, *inter alia,* by political conflicts during the frontier wars, their (missionaries') overtly religious mission has facilitated such destabilisation.

The historical events relating to this argument are considered to have an over-arching effect to the extent that other forms of media are completely submerged. This position is adopted because other print media have also been subject to similar material conditions albeit interpreting reality differently because of media policies.

The government of the day demanded a propagation of a utopian situation in a racially segregated South Africa, where a threat could only be the encroachment of Africans on white territory. Davenport (1991:543) makes the following observation in this regard:

> Underlying the sometimes extraordinary performances of South African governments, especially after 1948, in those intrusions into the private lives of people which their racialist philosophy led them to indulge in, lay a deep fear that if they did not do these things South Africa might sink into a land of chaos rather than continue as the well-ordered utopia which many whites imagined it to be. Apartheid, seen from this perspective, constituted the necessary rules of the game.

The mechanisms used to enforce those rules involved the police, the courts, education and the press. The press is considered, therefore, not to have emerged with an ideology that was qualitatively different from that of the state, the views expressed in such media were subjected to press gags. Afterall the press in South Africa was intended to serve the interests of the white community. Views expressed by the press will therefore be ignored as it is tantamount to a repetition of state policies. This does not however preclude the fact that there have been voices of dissension in the press. However, pursuing this argument will place the objective of this study beyond its immediate pre-occupation. As a result the better part of the argument made in this chapter will lean heavily on the data cleaned from historical data as attendant material conditions. Moreover, the issue racism as raised in some press reports and studies tend to cloud the reality of the relationship between labour and capital. As Gates (1984:4) observes:

> Race, as a meaningful criterion within biological sciences, has long been recognised as to be a fiction. When we speak of "the white race" or "the black race" or "the Jewish race", we speak in biological misnomers and, more generally, in metaphors.

Consequently, whenever "race" is referred to in this study, it should be understood

to be a metaphor of the relationship between forces of production, and not as human relationships. As Sebidi (1986:18) observes that "racism does not exist. But it exists as a social, not natural, construct. It is a socially acquired habit, the source or origin of which is something other than itself". Consequently:

> Racism is, therefore, a function of capitalist exploitation and serves to legitimate the status of those who own the means of production and their functionaries. As such 'race' is not a peculiarly South African problem (ibid.).

It can be expected, therefore, that we shall argue from this position that social experiences emanating from historical developments in South Africa have had impact on the manner in which the Basotho viewed their world. Further that such a world-view has subsequently influenced their creative writing. Ezeigbo (1991:14) makes the following relevant observation about African novel writers in a related argument:

> [African] writers have been influenced [both] by past and contemporary views of history, and the interpretation of the past in their work often shows this influence.

Another important aspect to note is that the Basotho of Lesotho, by this period, already had a tradition of writing from which they could draw experience. However, whether or not, that tradition was subsequently promoted or under-cut, is an issue that will be investigated in the ensuing discussion. What is important at this stage is that, naturally, such a history of creative writing should have established a solid base on which authors of latter generations could build.

5.4.2 The state of material conditions in South Africa

The Basotho in the Republic of South Africa have, generally speaking, been exposed to historical processes different from those of their counterparts in Lesotho. According to Gerard (1993:47), some of these are:

> The British conquest, the discovery of enormous mineral riches and the ensuing developments, industrialisation and urbanisation; the rise of

Afrikanerdom and the institutionalisation of *apartheid.*

It would be expected therefore to assume that African literatures in general, and the Sesotho novel in particular, "emerged and grew as specific responses to these wider processes" (ibid.). Such experiences have, however, through the notorious migrant labour system, affected the Basotho of Lesotho and those of the Republic of South Africa in a similar manner. This similarity is of such a nature that their collective experiential response to existing material conditions, remained the same.

It is such experiential responses, which, in spite of academic arguments, diminish a possibility of significant differences between the Sesotho literature in Lesotho and the Sesotho literature in South Africa. What lends weight to this argument is the fact that firstly, all the Basotho were affected in a similar way by industrialisation and urbanisation in South Africa. Both the Basotho from Lesotho and South Africa became migrant labourers; hence sojourners in white South Africa. This system did not affect them and their families in different ways. Secondly, the Basotho subscribe to a common origin as manifest in their *diboko* (totems)[1] and to their founding father, Moshoeshoe I, as part of their latter history. Thirdly, as an extension to the second point, the Basotho share the history of being driven away from parts of the Free State and the Cape provinces as well as their resettlement in other parts of South Africa and Lesotho. Therefore the only difference that stands is political, which development only affected the orthography. None of their spoken language, culture or world-view has been affected.

Lastly, what makes such a distinction insignificant, is the fact that the demands of the market further made possible for the Basotho of Lesotho to publish their works in South Africa, in the South African orthography. And to such works what became important was the label of a Mosotho, not nationality determined by political citizenship. Furthermore such works were also subjected to the same publication regulations as those of the Basotho of the Republic of South Africa (cf. Selepe, 1996:80-4).

---

[1] cf. Ellenberger, DF *Histori ea Basotho I*, Morija (1975) and Macgregor, JC *Basuto Traditions*, University of Cape Town (1957).

Consequently, to treat Sesotho literature as a single entity is, in spite of geographic boarders, not a misnomer. There have, over and above other forms of interaction, always been close family ties between the Basotho of Lesotho and those of South Africa. Their common life experience has been the one, which was collectively dictated by the expansion of Western imperialism irrespective of the form or nature of its agents.

5.5 The state of the Sesotho novel between 1930 - 1960

The period between 1930 and 1960 saw a new generation of Basotho novelists emerging after the pioneers such as Mofolo and Segoete had faded away. Among those who stood out are A. Nqheku, who wrote *Arola naheng ea Maburu* (1942) and *Lilahloane* (1944); S. Matlosa, who wrote *Molahlehi* (1946). M. Machobane published *Mphatlalatsane* (1947) and *Senate Shoeshoe'a Moshoeshoe* (1954) while B.M. Khaketla published *Meokho ea thabo* (1951) and *Mosali a nkhola* (1960). Further contributions came from G.C. Manyeli who published *Liapole tsa Gauta* (1953); M. Ntsala, *Sekhukhuni se bonoa ke sebatalali* (1954); S.N. Majara, *'Makotulo* (1953) and *O sentse linako* (1956); J.I.F. Tjokosela, *Mohale o tsoa maroleng* (1956) and A.C.J. Ramathe, who published *Tshepo* (1957). S.M. Guma who distinguished himself as an historical novelist closed this era with the publication of his first novel, *Morena Mohlomi, mor'a Monyane* (1960).

From their thematic content, the Sesotho novels of this period demonstrate a shift from exclusively religious teachings to exploring a variety of day-to-day experiences of the Basotho. This realist approach is an indication that the Basotho were beginning to move away from the naivety of a given world, to a world that they could rationalise about and subsequently attempt to change it. The novels which emerged during this period were no longer the ones where "the heroine was a passive victim; the villain was brought to justice by fortuitous events; the hero was manly, idealistic and honest..." (Klaus, 1982:10).

It is a period during which authors, through their stories, were beginning to ask questions about their society, a period where

> Psychological analysis gives way to political analysis of why good people are trodden down by circumstances. This fiction, [...], ideally quickens the reader's existing anger and then channels it toward a political outlet. Social tension is increased, rather than dissipated (ibid. p.11).

Therefore the response of authors, through their characters, to prevailing material conditions could no longer be simply determined by moral questions - the rights and the wrongs, the do's and don'ts. Answers were beginning to be sought from asking questions about why things were as they were. Such responses should, as a result, be viewed in terms of **cause** and **effect**. Therefore characters and events in the novels during this period should be understood in terms of prevailing material conditions which initiate certain responses and actions, because

> It is folly to say `we can't help it', `we are the creatures of circumstances' - `we are what society makes us'. We can help it - we can create circumstances - we can make society - or whence the efforts to redress and reform - moral, social, political, religious (cf. Klaus, 1982:11).

Therefore if we concede that an individual, like a work of art, is a social product, we can accept that a character in a story is equally a product of his/her circumstances. However, being a product of society should neither make the author or a novel hero passive respondents to social circumstances. Rather they should respond by identifying problems within society and working towards resolving them. Consequently, the prevailing material conditions form the basis of any understanding of the author's ideological leaning and the characters and related events in a novel.

5.6 Trends in the Sesotho novel from 1930 - 1960

Looking briefly at the subject matter of the novels during this era, there are noticeable, albeit overlapping trends. These relate to nostalgic memories with

regard to the traditional Basotho society, e.g. Nqheku and Guma; deculturation[2], e.g. Khaketla and Ntsane; and the encounter with the industrialised world and urbanisation, e.g. Matlosa and Majara. For the purpose of this study, only three novels falling in each of the mentioned categories will be examined. These are *Arola naheng ya maburu, Molahlehi* and *Mosali a nkhola*.

5.6.1 Nostalgia in Arola Naheng ea Maburu (Nqheku)

The story of Arola unfolds against a movement from subsistence farming to industrial farming, where there was a need for white farmers to bring Africans into their economic system. However, from their perspective, white farmers saw an African merely as

> A labour tenant, then as a wage labourer, rather than as a sufficient farmer, as a migrant contract worker, living in a compound [...] in an industrial world, where the possibility of ownership did not arise. [...] In the industrial world they see him as an employee, hedged in by restrictions on property ownership and investment [...] (Davenport, 1991:503).

This economic configuration did not allow partnership but preferred employer-employee relationship. It neither allowed mutual development, but encouraged accumulation of wealth through the exploitation of labour. To seek answers to this situation compels one to look in the past – the way it was in the pre-capitalist era, thus making one appear nostalgic.

Nostalgia, as alluded to already, generally refers to a yearning for the return of past the circumstances. This may not necessarily mean a blanket return of those circumstances but only those circumstances that are considered of value to a particular community. Unexpected changes in circumstances, often those that come about as a result of intervention, generally lead to such nostalgia. Intervention

---

[2] A term coined by Kunene to refer to a process whereby a people is pressured into developing a negative self-image and consequently rejecting its own cultural identity (cf Kunene, 1989:19).

normally comes with major paradigm shifts and result into people losing the rhythm of life. Furthermore intervention generally places people in situations they did not choose.

Having lost the rhythm of life people generally find that they are placed in a situation of desperation where they tend to react rather than act. Nqheku in this novel, which has generally been categorised under the *makgoweng motif*, attempts to evoke the memories of the way it was in the past in a secure and supportive Basotho traditional society. This is demonstrated in Arola's, the novel hero, never ending conflict within himself and between himself and *maburu* (farmers) arising from his inability to reconcile his past and present circumstances.

However, Nqheku can, on the surface, be misconstrued to have developed his story around a well-known racial problem in Southern Africa. What tends to lend credibility to this misperception is the fact that almost the entire book, fourteen out of the sixteen chapters, portrays Arola's life of conflicts in the land of *maburu* (farmers). For instance, Ntuli and Swanepoel (1993:66) argue that, *Arola* is:

> an outspoken work on racial tension in the Eastern Free State where Arola runs into the typical **misconceptions** and **misunderstandings** of the time. Although Arola, and the farmers, with whom he clashes, represent stereotyped extremes of their respective peoples, the work's link with reality cannot be denied (my emphasis).

Such observations obtain, and are valid, if the character is viewed as an autonomous individual not affected by the environment. However, if the same character is viewed as a representative of his/her community, a different situation emerges and the scope of the implications of his/her actions is widened. Therefore, if one looks beyond the seemingly obvious episodes in the story, a wider picture emerges. Arola's conflict with Maburu is not merely to validate "the typical misconceptions and misunderstandings of the time" (op. cit.).

In the first instance, Nqheku demonstrates that life in the land of *maburu* is not the one of milk and honey, as it is generally believed to be. It uproots one entirely from

one's traditional life and thrusts them into a swim or sink situation – with no recourse to security or moral support. On the contrary, the Basotho are well known for their culture of moral support that stems from their communal living – *motho ke motho ka batho*. Such a support system generally acts as a cushion, even under the most trying circumstances, to stave off the dungeon of misfortune.

However, the industrial society lacks such a system as people are merely viewed as production forces and not human beings. Contrary to the hopes for a better life that were raised by industralisation, the Basotho workers found themselves trapped in the dehumanising industrial environment. What matters in such an environment is the labour they provided not their humanity. As a result, most Basotho young men not only ended up not getting what they had hoped for but also losing everything they ever had. This notion is captured succinctly where Arola's father warns him on the eve of his departure to *makgoweng*:

> Bashanyana ba bakana ka uena ba atisa ho lahleha feela, ba 'ne ba tsekele ba se na ntho eo ba e sebetsang 'me qetellong ba kgutle ba apere 'methe ka mora lemo tse telele (p.8)
> (Boys of your age often disappear in vain, go about wandering aimlessly and in the end they come back empty handed after a considerable period of time).

Here the emphasis is not on Arola as an individual, but it is on him as a representative of his age group - a trend, so to say, in a particular social context. It is this perception, and the subsequent turn of events in the story, which gives Nqheku's novel a nostalgic character, which character leads us to the second and main point of our argument.

Nqheku's nostalgia of the traditional Basotho society of hope and stability is not inspired by the romanticisation of its problems, thus creating an impression that it was a perfect world. He acknowledges that it was not perfect, and like any society it had its own problems. Rather, what Nqheku does is to demonstrate that in spite of its imperfections, the Basotho traditional society was built on stability and confidence

in the hope of making a living within its social structures. Stability, confidence and hope have consequently inspired words of wisdom such as: *Letlaila le tlailela morena* (To err is human), *Ha ho motse o hlokang sehole* (There is no perfect household), *Monna ha a hloke kgomo a ntse a phela* (Man will always achieve what he is aspiring for), etc.

However, such words of wisdom, which constituted the philosophy of the Basotho life, lost their meaning and impact as a result of the disruption of the very social structure of the Basotho life (cf. Davenport, 1991:53-4). This led to a psychological paralysis where the Basotho, especially young men (and women to an extent) who had life expectations, were torn between the natural expression of self which was full of hope, and the artificial demands of the new promising world.

Consequently, such young people developed a new consciousness of living in the world of dreams, far removed from their real life. In the process they also developed a culture of survival that gave rise to a dependency syndrome. The culture of survival generally makes people to become pre-occupied with immediate needs rather than long term development (cf. Anyidoho, 1992:45). Ultimately they found themselves hoping and living for something that was not theirs, in a situation they neither chose nor created. They were entering with no alternative into a society they only hope could provide for them. Says Nqheku (p.7):

> E batla e le tloaelo ea bana ba bangata ba Lesotho hore, ere ha ba le, kapa ba fihla nakong ea lemo tse leshome le metso e mehlano, **ba tlokeloe ke khopolo ea ho ea Gaudeng kapa Maburung, ho ya batla teng "maitereko" kapa ntho tsa ho phela lefatsheng lena** (my emphasis).
>
> (It has become customary for the Basotho children around fifteen years of age, to develop a desire of going to Johannesburg or the farms, to go and seek fashionable clothing and other prerequisites for this life).

This new consciousness, common among young people aspiring for the so-called civilised world, landed many young men such as Arola in a situation where they were trapped between the two worlds. Hence the choice of the name Arola (divide),

for the main character of the story. This name is actually a call to the making choice between the two worlds: the world of the Basotho or the world of *maburu (makgowa)*.

This dilemma became a popular subject during this period. For instance, Mofokeng's two short stories, `Mona pela tsela' and `Hae', in his anthology *Leetong* (1954), typify this problem of Africans leaving their own world characterised by stability, confidence and hope, for a promising white world that is characterised by misery. On the one hand, `Mona pela tsela' (Here by the side of the road) demonstrates that an African can only see the pleasures of the white world but never participate in its affairs. `Hae', on the other hand, demonstrates that there is always an illusionary force, which attracts Africans to move into the white world, but more often than not, they lose everything into it. Like the biblical Moses, they can only see the Promised Land, but never get there. Indeed, white South Africa remained but a promising land to the Basotho and other people of African descent because they were legislated not to rise above certain levels of development.

With hindsight one is compelled to argue that Verwoerd is unfairly condemned for his infamous speech where he stated that there is no place for the African in the white community above the level of certain forms of labour. The following extract from Verwoerd's speech makes this position clear:

> What is the use of teaching a Bantu child mathematics when it cannot use it in practice? ... That is absurd ... Education must train and teach people in accordance with their opportunities in life ... It is therefore necessary that native education should be controlled in such a way that it should be in accordance with the policy of the State (cf. Motlhabi, 1984:54).

While Verwoerd was referring to education as a mechanism for limiting the advancement of Africans, such limiting factors were already in place in various spheres of life, especially in economy. The emerging white capitalism was already designed to make whites the sole owners of the means of production and African a permanent source of labour. Therefore Verwored deserves credit for being frank

about his intentions, unlike other white capitalist hypocrites who benefited from the same economic configuration, and continue to benefit, but pretend to be clean. It is this practice of disguised capitalism that deals the most excruciating pain hence Arola's assumed cynical behaviour. He neither expected, nor was he prepared for the heartless exploitation of white capitalism in the so-called civilised world.

It is such realities that partly explain Arola's hysterical behaviour in Nqheku's novel. There is on the one hand, hope and willingness by an African to exploit available opportunities. On the other hand, there are no means to access those opportunities, which characterise the civilised world of 'wealth' and 'knowledge'. In this case, wealth means the accumulation of money, and knowledge means adopting western values. Faced with such a situation one cannot help but be nostalgic about one's pre-colonial past.

Therefore Arola's behaviour can mainly be ascribed to frustration in the face of such harsh economic realities rather than mere racial conflicts. The fact that Arola clashed with *maburu* does not explain the problem but merely identifies the agent of the problem, which is Western imperialism and is personified by *maburu*. In fact, like colonialism, white racism is but one of the diverse mechanisms for promoting Western imperialism and its capitalist economic system via its liberal ideology. Liberalism subscribes, or at least it claims, to the culture of individual rights its hypocrisy is unmasked in its dealing with economic issues. Only the economically powerful seem to have individual rights thus making it impossible for mutual economic development with the less powerful.

This situation, which was initiated by the Berlin conference of 1884-1885, to rule Africa from Europe, is so intricate that it is not easy to discern (cf. Fowler & Smit, 1973:91-92). Since this conference a situation prevailed where "[Other] cultures [were placed] under total domination from others can be crippled, deformed, or else [made to] die" (Ngugi, 1993:xvi).

Ngugi (1986:1) also explains why it is not easy to understand the realities of the problems facing Africa today, especially with regard to African literature. He laments

that:

> The study of the African realities has for too long been seen in terms of tribes. [...] Even literature is sometimes evaluated in terms of the `tribal' origins of the author or the `tribal' origins and composition of the characters in a given novel or play. This misleading stock interpretation of the African realities has been popularised by the western media, which likes to deflect people from seeing that imperialism is still the root cause of many problems in Africa. Unfortunately some African intellectuals have fallen victims - a few incurably so - to that scheme [...]. The conflicts between people cannot be explained in terms of that which is fixed (the invariable).

It is for this reason that we argue in this thesis that the conflict between Arola and *maburu* is not a simple racial conflict. Rather it is a conflict between agents of African nationalism and the diverse agents of Western imperialism.

For instance Arola is firstly employed by a *leburu* (farmer) whose liberal values makes him look like English. As it is of liberalism, it thrives in a situation of desperation and conflict by giving empty promises to aggrieved parties but without confronting the perpetrator head-on (cf. Selepe, 1993:117). Says Nqheku about this liberalised *leburu*:

> Mohlankana Arola a tholoa polasing e 'ngoe 'me Leburu la teng le le molemo o kang oa Lenyesemane [...]. A fuoa mosebetsi o nang le chelete leha re sa tsebe hore na e n'e le mosebetsi ofe o chelete e kaalo, hoo re ho tsebang feela ke hore e n'e le mosebetsi o nang le chelete (p.11).
> (Arola was employed at a farm where its boer espoused English values. He was given a job in which he eamed a good salary of an unknown value. What we know is that he eamed a good living).

The foregoing excerpt demonstrates that another problem Nqheku is trying to grapple with is the one between labour and capital, something which is characteristic of liberalism as another agent of Western imperialism. This problem is

that of trying to unmask the complete grip of the Western world over Africa. That is why Robinson and Gallagher (1981:463) argue that:

> To be sure, a variety of different interests in London - some religious and humanitarian, others strictly commercial or financial, and yet others imperialist - pressed for territorial advances and were sometimes used as their agents [...]. For all the different situations in which territory was claimed, and all the different reasons which were given to justify it, one consideration, and one alone, entered into all the major decisions.

That decision was to have complete control of Africa by Europe and the Western world. This argument therefore makes it futile to re-narrate Arola's incidents with *maburu* such as the ones where he is flogged, where he burns the wheat and the stable of the farmer, his problems in town, etc. What is of significance, in simple terms, is that it is not important whether Arola has had 'good' or 'bad' employers. It is also not important whether or not he has had bad relationships with *maburu*.

What is significant is that his relationships with *maburu* demonstrate some facets of the grand scheme of Western imperialism. Therefore whatever relationship Arola has had with his various employers, ultimately reveals the relationship between African nationalism and Western imperialism. Arola's behaviour therefore demonstrates lone battles of African nationalists, which most of the time seem irrational, to engage such powerful agents in the effort to rid Africa of the grip of Western imperialism.

Nqheku's nostalgia about the African past becomes clear in chapter sixteen, the last chapter of his novel. Here Arola makes a decision to go back home where he belongs. He finds himself having to cross the river he crossed the day he left his home. Although the river is almost full, Arola ventures to cross it because he knows that he has a home beyond - a home amongst his own people. It is this home which gives him hope, in spite of its imperfections, that he'll be able to go on with his life.

We further notice that in the process of crossing the river, Arola is swept away by a strong current and loses everything he has brought along from across the river. In

an effort to save his 'wealth', a thought crosses his mind:

> A nke ke bee butle; seja-monna ha se mo qete; etsoe ha le fete khomo le je motho. Ha ke saletsoe ke bophelo, ho lekane nka llela'ng jwale ka llela mang hona" (p.69).
> (I should rather wait; man is never destroyed by what he loses. I still have my life; it is enough; whom can I blame for all this).

After miraculously crossing the river, Arola begins to see his ancestral world anew: It is a world to which he belongs - a world full of hope. It is therefore this renewal which clearly demonstrates Nqheku's nostalgia about the traditional Basotho society and their land. Says Nqheku about Arola's new vision of his own world, the same world he initially turned his back on:

> A bona Lesotho fatśe la mehlolo leo Molimo a sebelitseng mehlolo e mengata ho lona 'me a ntseng a tsoela pele ho e sebetsa. A fumana naha e kang ea tshomong [...]. Ntho e ntle e hohelang habonolo mahlo le maikutlo a molichaba. Metse eka lipalesa tse khabisitseng kapa tseo e leng hona li tla khabisa naha ena ea Thesele nakong eo mang le mang a ea ahileng Lesotho a tlang ho bitsoa Mosotho leha a ka ba Mosoeu, **leha empa che, e Mosoeu a tla 'ne a sale a bitsoa morena, hoba ke kholoa hore mosireletsuoa o nts'a tlameha ho hlompha mosireletsi le hona ea molemo tjena** (p.69) (emphasis added).
>
> (He saw a world of miracles where God had performed several miracles and still continued to do so. He found a world of dreams...Something, which fascinates a stranger. Villages symbolised decorated the landscape or were like potential decorations of Thesele's land during the times when everybody living in Lesotho would be called a Mosotho - whether black or white, although the white person would always rule because I believe the protected are obliged to respect a good guardian).

In the foregoing quotation Nqheku demonstrates, on the one hand, that the African

takes pride in that which defines him. Yet on the other hand has lost confidence of sustaining that hope of making a living on his own. For instance, the first part of this excerpt demonstrates how an African can reconcile with and take pride in his own reality (of existence). Yet the latter part demonstrates despondency and how he still naively worships the source of his misery.

This hollow hope of the dependent African survival, which diminishes his self-confidence and initiative, is also accentuated in the concluding section of last chapter of this novel. Nqheku demonstrates how a Mosotho in particular, and Africans in general, lacks confidence in his own value systems. This becomes evident where Nqheku says about Arola:

> A fetoha mekhoeng ya hae eohle e mebe, ea e-ba motho e mocha, eo kelello ea hae e khantsetsoang ke leseli la tumelo; motho eo hape pelong ea hae molao oa Kriste oa thatano le tsoarelano o busang, hobane boiphetetso le lonya le pelo e mpe li suthile li file tse ncha tsa Kriste sebaka (p.73).
> (He repented from his villain deeds, became a new creature, whose mind was enlightened by faith; a person in whose heart the laws of Christ of love and forgiveness were reining, because revenge and ill will had given way to Christianity).

What Nqheku says illustrates the ideological turbulence where, much as a Mosotho values his own Basotho social values, finds it wrong to fight or to engage the system which erodes those values. Nqheku therefore seems to suggest that the only way of surviving in this world, is to honour those who, through the power they wield, indiscriminately tread upon the value systems of the African people in general, and the Basotho in particular:

> Ho ka ba molemo, [...] ha ho le joalo, 'me nka thabela ha bana bohle ba ka inkela thuto tabeng tsa hao ngoan'a ka, Arola!" (p.72)
> (It would be advisable if it were so my child, I would be happy if all the children could learn from your experience).

A lesson Arola has learnt is that of daring to venture into the white man's land. One therefore senses, in this excerpt, an aura of capitulation, which in Nqheku's view seems inevitable because trying to turn back the clock can only spell disaster for a Mosotho. The only way to survive is to subscribe, unequivocally, and appeal to Western Christian principles. This is where Nqheku, like most African authors and/or critics, commits a cardinal mistake by seeking answers from a wrong source.

Fourny's (1991) study claims that (Western) Christianity is in fact Protestantism, which is generally perceived as Eurocentrism. Characterising Lukacs' views on the post-modern world as "fascination with and nostalgia for Ancient Creece" (p.197). Fourny's observation of Lukacs' Marxist interpretation of the modern world as nostalgia about Ancient Greece, seems to stem from the premise that "it is not Protestantism that gave birth to capitalism but nascent capitalism that made Protestantism necessary" (p.192). Fourny observes that Greece which was concerned with diet, private matters and the good life, as well as Judaism – a religion without any universal aspirations, marked by a mythological view (the Bible) that have influenced Protestantism. It is as a result of this background that capitalism is unable to homogenise "the world market and turn very human being into a consumer on the Western model: after all, one can only be said to be rich if others are poor and remain so" (p.192).

This observation makes any claim by Protestantism to espousing the doctrine of universal salvation and upholding civilised norms devoid of truth, if not outright hypocrisy. Contrary to popular beliefs that Christianity and civilisation originate in Europe, Fourny proves the opposite. In fact, he claims, "ancient Egypt was the most advanced society in the Mediterranean area and [...] it gave the world the concepts of eternal life and immanent moral justice, which [was] a major breakthrough in the civilizing process" (p.190-1). However, instead of Egypt, and hence Africa, influencing the world, Europe ultimately influenced the world because:

> The productive forces emigrated from the southern part of the Mediterranean basin to the European Atlantic northwest as the New World was "discovered" and Hellenism "(re)discovered." The road was thus paved for European

> conquest and worldwide domination and the construction of a Eurocentric ideology (p.191).

This is a configuration of power relations in the so-called modern world that *Arola* portrays. In a world beset by naked injustice how can one not be nostalgic, and revisit one's past? At the same time how can one be expected to act 'normally' in a dehumanising world? The novels that will be probed next will attempt to elaborate on these questions, based on their respective themes.

5.6.2 Industrialisation and urbanisation in *Molahlehi* (Matlosa)

The story of Molahlehi unfolds against the background of industrialisation and urbanisation in South Africa. However, as in the case of Arola, these developments are dictated by apartheid capitalism. As such Molahlehi is not at the centre of such developments but on the periphery, and the events portrayed illustrate the problems of such marginal people in a segregated society. As Davenport (1991:527) observes:

> Underlying the policy of urban segregation was a desire to reduce the power of the black man in the urban areas by making it difficult for him to acquire a stake in the town or, indeed, in his own location [...].

These measures aimed at curtailing the power to have a stake also have impact on the black man's economic development. Only a certain number of blacks, depending on the availability of jobs, could be allowed into urban areas. However, they were allowed only as tenants not property owners. Furthermore "the law, as enforced, did split husbands and wives if one of them did not qualify" (ibid.). These are but some of the effects of the infamous Native Registration and Protection Bill and the Urban Areas Act (cf. Davenport, 1991:532). It is also as a result of such Acts that the notorious pass system was introduced in order to monitor and control the movement of blacks in urban areas. Matlosa develops his story against this background.

Industrialisation and urbanisation are generally perceived as related processes and

so are their social consequences. Therefore a critique of the literature dealing with these subjects should, of necessity, spell out the cause and effect of these social processes. Such a critique of literature should also provide society with either a clear understanding of problems and/or solutions to problems wrought by industrialisation and urbanisation. This desire therefore places the relationship between literature and society at the centre of literary discourse because literature has, apart from social commitment, a social content as well as contexts.

Introducing his dissertation on *The English Novel and the Industrial Revolution* (1990), Werlin says the following about the relationship between literature and society:

> Basically, in our analysis of the social content of the novels and the social sources and social consequences of this content, we will be asking four general questions. What regularities characterise the images of society found in the novels? What incongruities exist between these images and the actual society? Why do novels choose to create these particular images? What are the consequences of these choices in terms of the social functions of the novels (p.1)?

Werlin's argument posits a notion that literature should ultimately perform a social function - to enlighten society about its problems, and by implication, provide solutions to its attendant problems. Therefore an implicit consideration of these questions will form the basis of the argument in the critique of Matlosa's novel. Such an endeavour becomes even more expedient when one considers Werlin's elaboration of the question of the relationship between literature and society by citing Burke (1957), who says:

> Critical and imaginative works are answers to questions posed by the situation in which they arose [...] (p.3) This point of view does not, by any means, vow us to personal or historical subjectivism. The situations are real; the strategies for handling them have public content; and insofar as situations overlap from individual to individual or from one historical period to another,

the strategies possess universal relevance (cf. Werlin, 1990:4-5).

Consequently, it becomes logical to attach importance to the argument that, the impact of industrialisation and urbanisation on the rural communities in general. It was firstly to prescribe the value of the community's wealth, and secondly, to create an illusion of better life in urbanised areas. This perception is also true of the context of the Basotho rural community moving to urbanised areas, from which *Molahlehi* is conceived.

However, there is an additional dimension of racism in the case of the Southern African situation, which one could argue that it is international as well. Essentially, racism also became an integral part of both industrialisation and urbanisation where people are treated differently on the basis of their colour. This is the question that Matlosa attempts to probe in this novel. Through his main character, Molahlehi, Matlosa demonstrates the social implications of both industrial and urban laws as they pertain to the African people in Southern Africa during this era of industrialisation.

Matlosa opens his book by referring to historical developments in Southern Africa since 1652. He refers to the urbanisation of Africans following the discovery of diamond and gold in places such as Kimberly and the Witwatersrand, respectively. He says:

> Ke ka tsona nako tsena re bonang batho ba hlaha ka makgalo ka hohle, ba fihla ba re ri Kimberly, didaemaneng. Ka moraonyana ho moo, batho ba heletseha hape ho leba Gauteng ho ya tjheka lejwana leo la bohlokwa (p.1).
> (It is during this period where we saw people migrating from different points, converging around Kimberly, the diamond fields. Later people gravitated to the Witwatersrand to go and dig the precious stone).

The migration of the Basotho to the industrial areas as a result of economic reasons has already been cited as one of the causes of the disruption of stable community life. The other cause, related to this one, is education, which became assimilist in

nature. Matlosa also demonstrates how the acquisition of the foreign languages (English and/or Afrikaans), and hence literacy, became crucial for the Basotho to have limited participation in the South African industrial world. Matlosa, using Masene - Molahlehi's father, demonstrates the assumed importance of these linguistic skills in the following manner:

> Empa eitse ha ke fihla hara matswete (Makgowa), ka fumana hantle hore bonatla ba ka ha bo na thuso, ka baka la ho hloka tsebo ena eo le nang le yona le mmao, ya ho buisana le dipampiri le ho bua leleme la baditjhaba (p.6).
>
> ((When I landed among the whites, I realised that my physique was worthless, because I lacked the skills, which you and your mother have, the skills of communicating with papers and speaking the language of the foreigners).

Furthermore, Matlosa realises that: "Re phela le matswete, mme re lokela ho ithuta ditsela tsa bona" (p.6). (We live with the white people, and we are bound to learn their ways of life). By implication this means that his (Matlosa's) way of life - the Basotho way of life, has become irrelevant to the industrialised and urbanised world. Hence it becomes imperative to learn the white man's way of life.

The life of the Basotho had, subsequently, to be moulded to suit the demands of industrialisation and urbanisation, and not their (Basotho) social needs. It is with similar observations that Marx argues that capitalism has changed everything into a mere commodity, which could be sold, on the labour market (cf. Fischer, 1970:55). This means that a person's worth, is henceforth, only determined on the basis of his/her contribution to capitalism in terms of the labour he/she renders. Therefore, other social considerations become irrelevant unless they are geared towards the promotion of capitalism.

Matlosa seems to take pains to elaborate on the preparatory stages of a modern Mosotho, for assimilation - not necessarily socialisation, starting with the significance of naming in general life and in an educational institution. We note, in

Matlosa's novel, that it is at Lovedale College where fame and material things captures Molahlehi's (The Lost One) attention.

It is here where he begins to admire a group of boys from Johannesburg, who are popular for their music and beautiful clothes, especially their group leader:

> Molahlehi a fumana hantle hore ha ho thwe motho ya rutehileng, ho bolelwa ya kang yena. A hla a lakatsa haholo hore a be jwale ka yena ka mekgwa le diketso. Pelo ya tjhesehela ho ka fihla Gauteng e le hore a bone sena se hlalefisang metswalle ya hae (p.13).
> (Molahlehi then discovered that what it actually meant to be an educated person like him. He therefore wished to be entirely like him. His heart longed for Johannesburg so he could see what made his friends so wise).

As a result of material things, which were to be obtained in Johannesburg, Molahlehi leaves for the City of Gold. He decides to leave together with his friend with neither acknowledgement nor permission from his parents.

Molahlehi is firstly fascinated by the way of life as it obtained in Johannesburg: Going to movies, dance shows and ultimately he is lured to live with a certain woman, Sainyaka, whom he hardly knew. Molahlehi finds free accommodation. What Molahlehi fails to realise, however, is that life in Johannesburg is about money and to earn money, one has to work: "Tjhelete ke ntho e kgolo ho mang le mang. Ke yona motheo wa bophelo lefatsheng" (p.17). (Money is important to everyone. It is the foundation of life).

Molahlehi only comes to a shocking realisation when his live-in wife begins to avoid him after his money has been used up. The same woman later throws Molahlehi out of the house. It is only then that he begins the expedition of looking for a job, and subsequently a room to rent. He finds a job and a certain Mosotho woman, Botlenyane, offers to live with him in Orlando. She uses Molahlehi's tax document to secure a residence permit for him.

Evidently, these experiences are overwhelming to an average Mosotho, as they

would for any person, who has been leading a relatively free life among his own people in a rural community. In Johannesburg Molahlehi has to pay tax as well as to acquire work and residence permits. What also becomes clear is that employers, according to Matlosa, are not obliged to acquire residence permits for their workers during this period, let alone to find accommodation for them. What they are interested in is only the labour of the worker not his well being as such.

By analogy, such problems, which are inconsistent with normal ways of life of caring for one another, can be expected to give rise to a society that has no moral values. As argued earlier, it is material conditions, not people's minds, which give people a particular consciousness - a world-view. On the one hand, most of Matlosa's characters - Ethel or Sainyaka, Botlenyane, Maria and Sobende - illustrate the assertion that people ultimately reflect the nature of their material life.

The characters, which Matlosa portrays, find themselves living under conditions where there is no regard for people as human beings but as entities of the production machinery. They are stripped of most of human virtues and their self-worth. Consequently, they begin to act mechanically rather than rationally. Their pre-occupation with survival leads them to desperation and dishonest living. Ethel (Sainyaka), Botlenyane, Maria and Sobende are leading a dishonest life of cheating and robbing people even to a point of murdering or conspiring to murder them as long their actions translate into the means survival - getting money and whatever they want.

On the other hand, Molahlehi, joined later by Ethel, emerges as a typical novel hero. He demonstrates the efforts of a person who is trying to re-establish social values in a society where they have degenerated. His natural self tells him to trust other people but when he does so he gets hurt. Ethel throws him out of the house, Botlenyane leaves him with an empty house, while Maria conspires with Sobende to poison and kill him, etc.

Matlosa in this way presents Molahlehi as a character that is affected by circumstances in which he finds himself. Molahlehi also learns not to trust anybody. However, his new attitude of mistrust makes him to hurt other people too. When

Ethel re-emerges as a changed person, Molahlehi is unable to trust her. Molahlehi's evident mistrust weighs heavily on Ethel and when he realises it, Molahlehi begins to question the wisdom of his new attitude and life becomes a nightmare to both of them. They can no longer speak freely to each other about their concerns and desires.

Matlosa has, in this instance, unarguably, a clear vision of the question he is trying to address. Following his portrayal of events, Matlosa seems to have succeeded in painting a broad picture of problems wrought by industrialisation and urbanisation. He has also adequately demonstrated the psychological, emotional and social impact of these two processes. His success can to a great extent be attributed to his realist approach. However, he fails in his attempt to provide the answer to the question he raises.

Instead of approaching his answer from a realist view, Matlosa spiritualises his approach. This radical change in his approach then undermines any attempt of providing rational answers. He takes his characters, Molahlehi and Ethel, and places them in a spiritual world, which does not form part of his milieu. This then raises a curious question whether Matlosa is suggesting that industrialisation and urbanisation, together with their attendant problems, should be left as they are and that people should concern them with the world beyond - the hereafter.

Common sense tells us that the tendency to reduce Africans to a source of cheap labour, restricting their movement and placing them in segregated areas, is a man-made problem. Then if Molahlehi epitomises getting lost in terms of going to the inhuman industrial and urban areas, surely the answer cannot be sought from the relationship between God and man. However, this is what Matlosa does. He makes Molahlehi's life, as opposed to his environment, appear sinful. Hence avoiding the question of addressing the inhuman conditions, which characterise the industrialised and urbanised life.

Such thinking can only explain the contradictions created by the Calvinist Christian doctrines of spiritual salvation where people are not encouraged to concern themselves with their material well being in this world. Consequently, Matlosa is

consciously ignoring the sinful social structures, which dehumanise people. The situation, which he should address is to get relevant answers to questions raises.

Ntuli and Swanepoel's (1993:29) observation provide a clue for understanding such a trend in Sesotho literature:

> Given the new-found possibilities of Christian faith, concomitant with that of the written medium which could be enlisted to reconstruct some pride in their respective nationalisms, dwindling now, if not shattered by the intervention of the whiteman - how could their work go against the tide - boldly resistant and demanding freedom?

Therefore whether or not the Basotho authors such as Matlosa were conscious of the implications of their Christian faith for their writing, is a matter of debate. What emerges, rather, is that this faith seems to give the final stamp - a landmark, to every work produced during this era. That is, failure to reconcile faith with reality.

This mode of thinking further confirms a claim made earlier that Protestantism, founded on Calvinist theology, is indeed a product of capitalism. Being a theology of capitalism, the Calvinist interpretation of the Bible is consequently capitalist inclined. That is why it became possible to justify the evils of racist capitalism. This is a dimension of Western Christianity that Matlosa and other African authors have failed to fathom.

It seems to them that to challenge this state of affairs would be tantamount to challenging the status quo. To them wealth and the concomitant power of the white man, on the one hand, and the poverty and the concomitant powerlessness of the black on the other, is God's design. Therefore it is normal for the white man to be rich and powerful, and normal for the black man to be poor and powerless. Any attempts to change this `holy' design can only land a black man in more serious trouble. This mode of thinking is akin to a process of deculturation which will be probed next with reference to Khaketla's *Mosali a nkhola*.

5.6.3 Deculturation in *Mosali a Nkhola* (Khaketla)

Kunene (1971:xi), the person who coined the term 'deculturation', argues that our enlightenment, which he equates with the liberation of a Mosotho in particular, and Africans in general, should lead us to liberate the term 'literature' from its erstwhile over-literal definition to include all forms of verbal art. This also raises a curious question whether in African literature 'western civilisation' should not be reinterpreted as the 'antithesis of development'. This is what Kunene, too, seems to suggest.

Kunene argues, in this instance, that verbal art should be understood to refer to the reservoir of the original forms of art, which embodies the values, and philosophies of the Basotho people. Consequently, wisdom, values and philosophies should be understood to be the direct results of material conditions in which the Basotho people found themselves, and hence a reservoir for a reflection of those circumstances. In a sense this reservoir is an important store of raw materials which are essential for the development of the Basotho.

Therefore to tamper with this reservoir means that one is faced with cultural snobbery and ethnocentricity. As a result one is in a much graver position thus much more likely to be swallowed up and born anew. In such a situation one is then born anew and cleansed from one's cultural 'heresies' (cf. Kunene, 1971:xi). Kunene continues to point out that one is also:

> in danger of undergoing 'deculturation' [...] the process whereby, at the meeting point of two cultures, one consciously and deliberately dominates the other and denies it the right to exist, by both directly and indirectly questioning its validity as a culture, denigrating it, making its carriers objects of ridicule and scorn, and thus finally leading to its questioning by the very people whom it has nurtured and given an identity and positive being (ibid.).

The sentiments, which Kunene expresses here, actually refer to the *modus operandi* of Western cultural imperialism and its agents. Perhaps, before dwelling on the portrayal of this process by Khaketla, it will be necessary to re-visit the notion of

culture *per se* in order to clear some misconceptions surrounding it.

African culture has oft been conceived as referring to outdated ways of living, which belong to the archives, so to say. It has neither been perceived nor studied as a dynamic entity capable of transforming and adapting to new circumstances. It is this perception which has legitimised the rejection and replacement of African culture by the so-called civilised Western culture.

Myburgh's (1981:12) thesis on culture and people seems to provide a solution, which could clear these misconceptions once and for all. He says:

> Culture does not comprise everything man produces but only those products of his activity that have become **part of his collective adaptation within the context of a people**. Individual products that have not gained general acceptance among a people do not form part of their culture [...]. **Culture therefore implies norms or standards that may apply to thought, speech, and other actions as well as material objects** (emphasis added).

Therefore if culture is linked to thought, speech, actions and material objects, there is no way in which it can remain static. Noting further that people produce culture in their effort to adapt to their environment, and that it ultimately gives them an identity, implies that culture is an evolving entity.

Therefore if the world of a people expands and changes, so will their culture expand and change. However, such processes of expansion and change are generally internal and acquire legitimacy within a people who make and espouse a culture as a carrier of their identity. Says Myburgh (1981:1) about the significance of the relationship between a culture and a people:

> A people is a human group producing and maintaining a culture, which is the **cohesive aggregate of results issuing from characteristic collective adaptation to the environment in the widest sense**, whether these have found expression as concrete objects or not (emphasis added).

If we follow these definitions closely, it becomes evident that by imposing one culture over the other, not only stifles the development of a subjected culture but it also disrupts the cohesion of a people who espouse it. This is the situation, which Khaketla tries to portray in his novel, **Mosali a Nkhola**, but at the same time revealing the ideological turbulence within which he is trapped as the author.

The subject of *diretlo* (ritual murders) which Khaketla claims to have inspired him to write this novel is by and large dwarfed by a consideration of deculturation. In fact, although *diretlo* occurred frequently among the Basotho, it was never a widely accepted practice, a norm, so to say. This unpopular practice seems to have largely occurred as a result of a sense of insecurity as will be illustrated later. Therefore it was never a proactive exercise but a reaction in the wake of uncertainty. Ntuli and Swanepoel (1993:68) aptly capture the gist of the uncertainty, which characterises this novel. They claim:

> Set in the heyday of British colonial rule in Lesotho, with an over-elaborate system of local administration through traditional chiefs, the novel explores the consequences when **a young ruler, who has a wide education and who values the freedom of choice, has to face the prejudice of conservative traditionalists** (emphasis added).

It should be pointed out from the outset that the 'over-elaborate' local administration is a view of the British, not of the Basotho towards their administration. In fact, this so-called over-elaborate local administration, turns out to be one of the most democratic federations at the time. Says Davenport (1991:55):

> Moshoeshoe's state was not an autocracy, but a loose federation held together by two kinds of bond, the maintenance of family ties within a large ruling house, and the consent of subordinate chiefs. [...] In general, Moshoeshoe controlled his sons and his leading subordinates – [...] by giving them their head as much as possible, and balancing their influence in the tribal *khotla* with that of his councillors [...].

Furthermore, the freedom of choice pointed out above is not just about a young ruler and the conservative traditionalists. It is also about what is right for the Basotho, not just for Mosito; and what is right for the British. A young ruler is therefore actually thrown at the centre of this dispute. Consequently, the inclusion of the latter dimension, which has oft been ignored, changes the context of the story substantially. The novel turns out to be more about deculturation rather than administration or ritual murder.

The novel opens with the arrival of chief Lekaota's son, Mosito and his peers Pokane and Khosi, who have just graduated from Lovedale. Immediately we find a parallel being drawn between this event and a graduation from *lebollong* (the Basotho initiation institution). Consequently, chief Lekaota organises a welcome feast for his son, as it would have been the case if he had graduated from *lebollong.*

Events during this feast establish a context within which the process of deculturation will unfold in the rest of the story. Says Khaketla about Mosito's graduation:

> Kajeno he, tsena tseo Lekaota a neng a li lakatsa li ne li phethehile. Mosito o ne a phethile thuto ea ntat'ae, a kene sekolo, **a ithutile bohlale ba Makhooa**, a itokiselitse hore a tle a tsebe ho nka borena ba ntat'ae ha nako ea teng e fihla. Koana moo a tsoang teng Kolone, **mophato o ne o chele. Le eena Mosito, joaloka makoloane a tsoang mophatong, boshemane bo ne bo setse bo echa le mophato koana, bonna ba hae, e leng thuto, a e-tla a bo phuthile ka kobo** (p.2) (my emphasis).
>
> (Today, all that Lekaota wished for has been fulfilled. Mosito had fulfilled his father's teachings and had attended school, learned the wisdom of the white man ready to take after his father at the right time. Like the initiates who came with him, the era had ended, boyhood had remained behind, his manhood, which is education, comes along intact).

In the proverbial *lebollo* when the initiates graduate, the *mophato* (dwelling of initiates) is burned down to symbolise the end of an era - the destruction of what

defined their past, and to demonstrate the acquisition of their new status, hence a new era. Khaketla uses the same metaphor to demonstrate that Mosito, by graduating at college, has shed his previous identity and has acquired a new one.

The identity that Mosito has shed is the same as the one that qualified Moshoeshoe, the founder of the Basotho nation. Clinging to such an identity, Khaketla claims, is like clutching the straw when one is swept away by a strong current. According to Khaketla that strong current is Western civilisation, which was sweeping across Africa.

However, what Khaketla sees as the current of civilisation is in fact the seed of annihilation and alienation. In fact, Khaketla acknowledges this when he says that Mosito comes back "a ithutile bohlale ba Makhooa" (having learned the wisdom of the Whiteman) (p.2). By implication this education annihilates his past and alienates him from that which defined him, namely, the wisdom of the Basotho, which has nurtured and given him an identity - the identity of a Mosotho, the identity of Moshoeshoe. Says Ngugi (1986:3) about the effect of Western education, which he refers to as a cultural bomb, as it applies to the African mind:

> The effect of a cultural bomb is to annihilate a people's belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves. It makes them see their past as a wasteland of non-achievement and it makes them want to identify with that which is furthest removed from themselves; for instance, with other people's languages rather than their own.

Now, considering all these factors, the question that arises is whether Mosito's education of annihilation and alienation will benefit him and his people. To initiate an answer to this question Khaketla creates a situation of potential conflict. Mosito marries an uneducated woman, Sebolelo, who is steeped in her cultural beliefs. As if it was not enough, Mosito's *lekgotla* (council) is divided into two camps: the former advisors of his late father who are uneducated, and his own peer advisors who are educated. These contradictions seem to pre-empt the developments that will follow during Mosito's reign as chief, which will illustrate cultural conflict. Mosito has,

indeed, become a trapped African "who has been assimilated, and then found it impossible to accept his own traditional culture" (Larson,1971:170).

A real test for Mosito comes when the British make a proclamation to reduce the number of councils in Lesotho from 1340 to 117. It becomes evident that if this proclamation is implemented, Mosito's council will be one of those that will have to be phased out. While there is provision for the Basotho nation to express their opinion on this matter, experience tells Khaketla that such opinions will not change the resolve of the British:

> Ke mokhoa oa Makhooa [...] ha a rata ho kenya ntho. A ee a re ho hlahisoe maikutlo, ere ha a se a hlahisitsoe ebe ha a mameloe, haeba a sa lumellane le se batloang ke lithena. U sa tla b'u mpotse; haeba sechaba se ka hana taba ena, 'Muso o tla e sebetsa feela ka ho rata ha oona empa re ntse re hana (p.30).
>
> (It is the way white people introduce their things. They invite opinions but they do not consider if they don't agree with what they want. You'll ask me; if the nation disagrees, the government will proceed to implement its plan in spite of our refusal).

Khaketla appears not to be naive in his admiration of *bohlale ba Makhooa* (the wisdom of the whites). He is aware that the British neither need the willingness nor consent from anyone to implement their programmes. Now, with Mosito educated in the wisdom of *Makhooa*, it remains to be seen whether they will respect his wisdom; or whether he'll use that wisdom to prevent them from interfering with that which has made him - his cultural institutions.

Mosito is a chief by birth, neither by choice nor circumstances; and this is one of the most valued cornerstones of the Basotho government system. However, in trying to please the British, Mosito ignores this truism to his own peril. He loses the support of his own people, but still does not get it from the British. He also seems not to be aware that the British only need his support as far as it can help them to reach their goal, not to become one of them. It is for similar reasons that Armah laments:

> There is something so terrible in watching a black man trying at all points to be the dark ghost of a European, and that was what we were seeing in those days. ... How could they understand that even those who have not been anywhere know that the black man who has spent his life fleeing from himself into whiteness has no power if the white master gives him none? ... We knew then, and we know now, that the only real power a black man can have will come from black people. We knew also that we were the people to whom these oily men were looking for their support (quoted by Larson, 1971:262-3).

Similarly, Mosito is so naïve to recognise the treachery of the British and to fathom its consequences both for him and his subjects. As it is a practice among colonialists, the changes they introduce can only be supported but not negotiated. This is also the case in this novel, and Khaketla captures this scenario succinctly. One of the first changes, which go along with the reduction of councils, is that the fines will no longer be paid to councils but into the *Mokotla oa Polokelo ea Sechaba* (National Trust Fund). This, Khaketla claims, will curtail the malpractice by some council of imposing unreasonable fines. The second change is that chiefs will be paid from the *Mokotla oa Polokelo ea Sechaba* according to their number of people who are paying taxes. The third change is that lost live stock which could not be claimed, which was initially given to chiefs, will henceforth be sold and the proceeds will go into the coffers of *Mokotla oa Polokelo ea Sechaba*.

These changes imply that the powers that go along with the institution of the Basotho traditional leadership are also being curtailed. The fact that, for their social roles, chiefs are born within this traditional institution is no longer important. This process is seen in the portrayal of the restructuring of councils. Mosito's council is to be dissolved and its powers taken over by chief Mosuoe. Administrative matters will start from Mosuoe and then be referred to chief Rantsoeli of the Qacha district. This means that Mosito is not only losing his status as chief but that he is also forfeiting jurisdiction over his own people.

The question that Khaketla is grappling with is then to establish whether it is Mosito's education and civilisation or the Basotho tradition, which will provide the

answer to this problem. Khati and his group - the uneducated clique, resolve that Mosito should be advised to fight against this change:

> Morena, taba ea rona e 'ngoe feela ngoan'a mong'a rona ke hore u itlhahise ho Morena-e-Moholo, a u talimele litaba hantle, o lokisetsoe litokelo tsa hao, e leng hore o be le lekhotla la hao, 'me le oena u tsejoe u le Morena oa Sebaka. Kamoo Khosi a re boleletseng kateng, re fumana hobane literekeng tsohle tsa Lesotho ha ho moo Morena oa Sebaka a leng mong, haese ho sena sa rona feela, le sa Quthing, le sa Mokhotlong. Literekeng tse ling ho bile ho na le marena a mang a bitsoang a Libaka, empa ao maikutlong a rona a sa o feteng ka letho (p.35).
>
> (Chief, there is only one issue with us, child of our master: it is that you should present yourself to the Head Chief so that he could consider your case, which is that you deserve to have your own council and that you should be known as a Local Chief. According to Khosi's information there is no district throughout Lesotho where there is only one Local Chief except this one of the Quthing the Mokhotlong districts and ours. In all of the districts there is even what are called Local chiefs, which chiefs, in our view aren't better than you are).

To this proposition Mosito comes up with a very surprising answer, typical of an alienated African who no longer values his traditional institutions. Afterall European education was not aimed "at elevating the African but at devaluing his culture, and that was why it was thought necessary to strip him of his true self and put on him a foreign one" (Egudu, 1978:30). That is why the educated African generally has the obsessive admiration of the mind of the European. Therefore anything African no longer make sense to him. Hence Mosito's answer to one of his older advisors:

> Monnamoholo [...] taba ea hao kea e utloa, ha ke e utloe. Ke e utloa hobane e buuoa ka Sesotho; ha ke e utloe hobane ha ke bone hore na ekaba tseko ea ka nka e tsetleha ka mabaka afe (ibid.).
>
> (Old man I understand you but do not understand your case. I understand you because you speak Sesotho; I don't understand you because I can't see

how I can substantiate my case).

Mosito's response suggests that the proposition does make sense even within the Sesotho context. Further that he is powerless to oppose it on the basis of the framework of the mind that originated the change. This response, on the one hand, evidently makes a mockery of the *bonna* (manhood) which Mosito is claimed to have acquired at Lovedale. He seems not to be man enough to fight for his rights even if his people give him power to do so. On the other hand, to his own people, there seems to be a naive shred of hope that Mosito's education can be used as an argument to substantiate the claim of his status of a Local Chief. They are not aware that it is the very education that has atrophied him. This hollow hope of Mosito's advisors is captured in the following extract:

> Hona joale ke sa bona taba e le 'ngoe feela, e ka re thusang, e leng ea hore marena ana a boleloang, ao ho thoeng ke a Libaka, ha a na thuto e kaalo ka ea hao, 'me ba 'Muso ba tla u tlatsa hore u neoe litulo tse o lokelang, tse lokelang thuto ena ea hao, e leng eona ntho e batlwang haholo matsatsing ana (p.35).
>
> (For now I can only see one thing, which could help us, it is that these chiefs, who are called Local Chiefs, do not have the type of education you have. Therefore the government will support your claim to your rightful position, equivalent to your education, something which is demanded these days).

Another argument, which is brought forward to persuade Mosito to fight the restructuring of councils, is that Lekaota's council has always been economically viable and that the restructuring can only diminish its revenue (cf. p.36). Hence the following candid advice:

> ...haeba u ke ke oa ema ka maoto, ua itseka, etlaba o sethoto se seholo haholo. Hlalefa, Morena, u itseke joaloka monna, ho seng joalo u tla khangoa u nts'u talimile (p.36)
>
> (...if you cannot stand up and fight, you'll be the worst fool. Be wise, Chief, and fight like a man, otherwise you'll be strangled awake).

After such persuasive arguments Mosito promises to reconsider his initial position of not challenging the restructuring of councils. On consulting with his peers later, Mosito is again informed that the possible loss of revenue is basic to the problem of restructuring. However, his peers are not keen to fight the process legally because it might be costly (cf. p.37).

It becomes evident from the latter argument that Mosito, as a Local Chief, has no legal recourse to the problem facing him. In the traditional Basotho legal system, judgement would be handed out on the basis of moral justice and not economic power. However, in the case of the British legal system, the outcome of the case might depend on who has, through better financial resources, assembled the better legal team. Therefore this imposition of the imperialist culture creates a situation where the Basotho customs are rendered powerless to advance their own interests.

Faced with such possibilities, which leave Mosito undecided, Khaketla initiates action by introducing Sebolelo, Mosito's wife. Khati and his group go secretly to Sebolelo to encourage her to persuade Mosito to oppose the restructuring of councils. They try to prove to her the implications of this restructuring of councils, especially how it will affect the future of her son, Thabo:

> Kopo ea rona he, Mofumahali, ke hore o mpe o hauhele ngoana enoa oa hao ka ho bua le ntat'ae, le ho mo eletsa hore a tseke, hobane ha a sa etse joalo, etlaba o nka lerapo o le akhela molaleng oa Thabo a nts'a phela. Na uena u khotso hore ngoan'a hao a khangoe u le teng, u talimile, ebe ha phamise le monoana o monyenyane feela hore u mo pholose? (p.42)
> (Our request, chieftainess, is that you should consider this child by talking to his father, by advising him to fight because without doing that, he'll literally be hanging Thabo alive. Are you satisfied to see your child strangled in your presence without lifting your finger to save it?)

This passionate plea touches Sebolelo's heart and she resolves to confront her husband about the issue of councils. In this way Khaketla pits Sebolelo against Mosito by creating a situation where Mosito could focus on his and his son's future

emotionally rather than rationally. Sebolelo starts by instilling a feeling of guilt in Mosito for withholding the important information, about the restructuring of councils, from her as his natural confidante. She continues to show Mosito that it will be scandalous not to resist the reduction of councils. She says:

> Ke re na u hopola hore haeba o ka tlohela ho tseka, eaba borena ba hao boa fela, na o hopola hore Thabo o tla hlohonolofatsa lebitla la hao joalokaha la Morena Moshoeshoe le hlohonolofatsoa ke bohle? U ratela'ng hore e tle ere ka tsatsi le leng Thabo a otliloe ke lefatse, a feta pel'a lebitla la hao, ere bakeng sa hore a ise liteboho le hlompho, ebe o tsoela leo la hao ka sehlotho sa mathe, o re: "Ke papatlele e tjena ka baka la mphophahali ena e shoetseng mona!" (p.45).
> (I'm asking you to consider whether, if you abandon the fight, Thabo will ever honour your grave, as it is the case with Moshoeshoe's? Why do you allow a situation where Thabo, on passing by your grave will, instead of thanking and honouring it, mutter: "I am miserable because of the fool which lies here!)

At this juncture Khaketla introduces the possibility of a miraculous solution even before Mosito could finally make up his mind. Through this trick, Khaketla instils fear in Mosito thus directing his attention away from a rational solution.

Khati and his group summon a traditional healer, Selone, whose perception concurs with theirs and that of Sebolelo. Selone does not mince his words about the precarious implications of this development of the restructuring of councils for the Basotho:

> Ha ke kholoe hore ho na le monna oa Mosotho, ea nang le kelello e phethehileng ea ka lumelang hore makhotla a fokotsoe. Batho ba bangata haeso koana ha ba e utloisise; empa ke bona hobane e re hlotse, hobane **bahlalefinyana bana bao re ba khethileng ho re emela Lekhotleng la Sechaba bona ba re e lokile, 'me ba se ba lumellane le Makhooa** hore Mokotla ona oa Polokelo ea Sechaba ke ntho e molemo haholo, o theoe. **Kamoo 'na ke le mong ke talimang taba ena kateng, ke fumana hobane**

ke polao ea marena a rona le pheliso ya borena ba Basotho. (p.46) (emphasis added).

(I don't think there is balanced Mosotho man who can agree to the reduction of councils. A number of people from my place do not understand; but I accede the defeat because these learned people we have chosen to represent us the National Council claim that is right, they have agreed with the whites that the National Fund is beneficial, so it must be established. The way I see it, it is the destruction of our chiefs and the chiefdom of the Basotho.)

From this observation it is evident that most of the uneducated Basotho are apprehensive about any form of interference in the structure of their governance, while the educated seem more inclined to accept such changes. The observation made underlines further the claim made earlier that Western education has made the elite Basotho not to value their traditional institutions any longer.

What follows from such a situation is the division of a nation along ideological lines. Alluding to this situation of dividing society on the basis of education, Mazisi Kunene (in Okpaku, 1973:49-50) says:

> Colonial ideology has atrophied our cultural limbs and in their place seeks to place artificial ones. This way it hopes to separate the herd from the elite, the barbaric and illiterate mass from the 'elegant' Intellectuals. Yet the pre-colonial history of Africa, whatever defects it had, preached emphatically an integrated ideology of culture, economics and politics. This is illustrated by a highly socialised artistic and literary tradition.

The highly socialised artistic and literary tradition referred to here are the verbal arts, which initially kept society as a closely-knit entity. By implication this observation suggests that apart from the ideological divide between the educated and the uneducated, modern Sesotho literature - a novel in this case, also became, through literacy, class literature. Its audience is the elite who can read and write while the

rest of the Basotho who do not have the benefit of education are marginalised from the appreciation of this modern art.

Therefore it can be assumed that while Khaketla translates what obtains in society into art, he simultaneously promotes the ideology of the elite. By this he demonstrates the dilemma - the ideological contradiction, of a Mosotho who has his one leg rooted in his tradition and the other dangling on the periphery of the so-called Western civilisation.

Khaketla demonstrates this dilemma with Mosito whom, when faced with a gloomy future then falls back to his own cultural base. Being a chief by birth, he is ultimately persuaded to save this institution not only for himself, but also for his son and his people.

The impending possibility of losing his status as chief subsequently compels him to hold secret meetings with Khati and his group without the knowledge of his educated peers. He seems to have come to a sobering awakening that he owes his life to his own people and tradition, and not to the British and their civilisation.

Coming back from one of the secret meetings he is holding with Khati and his group, we encounter Mosito saying the following to his wife, 'Mathabo:

> Ke rerile hona mohla ke neng ke buisana le uena. Mantsoe ao esaleng o mpuela 'ona ha a ka a mpha tsoeea, 'me qetellong ka bona hobane ua bolela, ha u re ke tseke, hobane ha ke sa etse jwalo ke tla be ke bolaea Thabo, 'me borena ha a sa tla bo bona (p.58).
> (I decided on this the day I spoke to you. Your words never gave rest, and in the end I recognised your point that I should fight, lest I killed Thabo, who will no longer taste chieftancy).

Khaketla, through Mosito, explains further that an agreement has been reached to challenge the restructuring of councils, although they do not agree on the method. Mosito and his peers prefer to take the matter to court while Khati's group prefers to enlist the services of a traditional doctor. 'Mathabo, who has been brought up in the

untainted Sesotho culture, also prefers to engage the services of a traditional doctor.

The problem reaches climax when Mosito loses the case at Matsieng and is subsequently summoned to Rantsoleli's. Instead of accompanying Mosito together with other councillors, Maime fakes illness. Maime then uses this chance again to implore 'Mathabo, Mosito's wife, to persuade the chief to engage the services of Selone, a traditional doctor. This they do in spite of Mosito's obvious unwillingness to fight for his position via this route. The significance of this development has implications for Mosito as a round character - typical of a novel hero. He changes when circumstances change.

When he comes back from Matsieng, Mosito finds that 'Mathabo is more than ever determined to persuade him to seek help from Selone. The dead cobra, which Mosito discovers on his bedroom window, breaks the deadlock. Mosito changes his initial view and begins to see a possibility of survival in his traditional culture.

All the doubts that Mosito initially had, and the dislike he initially harboured against traditional healers, are dispelled by Selone's accurate diagnosis of Mosito's problem. He is willing to let Selone, through the ancestors, lead the way. Khaketla demonstrates this change of heart in Mosito's monologue after discussing this matter at length with 'Mathabo:

> Empa 'Mathabo ke mosali oa ka, ea ratiloeng ke ntate, eo le 'na ke ileng ka mo rata ke sa mo qobelloe; na ekaba ruri a ka nkhelosa tsela, a ntihela a re lebaka la ka le eena ke lefe? [...] Na e tla ba ke tlola taelo ea ntate ha nka amohela keletso ee ea hae, ka ka ka batla lenaka la borena? Koana haeba ke sa rate ho ithetsa, ke lokela ho lumela ha a re ke hloka seriti, hobane hoja se teng ha ke kholoe hore tsena tse ntlhahetseng li ka be li ntlhahetse (p.82)
>
> (But 'Mathabo my wife, who was loved by my father, whom I also willingly loved, can she really mislead me, for what reason? Will I be disobeying my father if I accept her advice, and sought the horn of chiefs? If I don't deceive myself I have to admit that I lack dignity, because all this would not have happened to me).

By this time Mosito no longer consults with Khosi and Pokane, his educated peers. He does everything with 'Mathabo together with his father's elderly and uneducated councillors. It is at this point where Khaketla successfully demonstrates that culture is to one as a nail is to the finger. Mosito's acquired western culture seems to fail him at the moment of need. Instead, hope seems to emerge from the culture he has initiallly rejected. Issues such as *lejwe la kwena* (the stone of a crocodile) and *lenaka la borena* (the kingship horn) although they initially baffled him, Mosito is now more than ready to acquire them. It is these things, like Mofolo's Chaka, which will guarantee him *borena bo boholo* (a huge kingdom) and *siriti* (dignity).

However, Khaketla as a graduate of a missionary institution, does not want to glorify social practices that are in contradiction with Christian teachings. There is a line he cannot cross without falling back on Christianity. It is the acquisition of the liver of Tlelima through ritual murder, an essential mixture for the *lenaka la borena*, which sounds the gong to the end of Mosito's cherished kingdom. Mosito and his accomplices are apprehended and sentenced to death following the discovery of Tlelima's corpse.

What should be noted in this novel is that in spite of Khaketla's expressed or implied intention of writing about *diretlo*, this seems to be of lesser importance. Ritual murder, justice or injustice, educated or uneducated people, backward or advanced culture; all contribute to one central idea: If a foreign culture is forced upon a people, it is bound to disrupt the social fabric of such a people, thus causing dislocation and uncertainty among them.

5.7 Conclusion

The Sesotho novel of the period under consideration definitely has a peculiar character. That character is the one adorned with ideological turbulence, where eurocentrism as a way of life for the Basotho is interrogated, as demonstrated in the novels reviewed. This stage of ideological turbulence is summed so well by Ntuli and Swanepoel (1993:28), who argue that:

> Thus a culture of writing unwittingly took root. This had been an unreal consequence of the doctrine of love, forgiveness and faith, which led to artificial political neutrality - a feature which would plague the literatures for almost the entire century. This, in retrospect, signals something more prevalent than mere neutrality. This neutrality should rather be read as despondence.

Therefore the period between 1930 and 1960 should be considered to be a most critical one in the historical development of Sesotho literature in general, and the Sesotho novel in particular. This is the period which decided, unless something extraordinary happened, whether Sesotho literature came of age or whether it became for ever dwarfed by circumstances beyond its own means of existence, thus causing a never-ending cycle of ideological turbulence. However, the answer to this critical question will be explored in full in the next chapter, where the notion of perceptual and ideological shifts will be dealt with at a more profound level.

CHAPTER 6

PERSPECTIVES ON THE CONTEMPORARY SESOTHO NOVEL (1960_S - 1990_S): AN EXPLORATION OF PERCEPTUAL AND IDEOLOGICAL SHIFTS

6.1 Introduction

The era from the sixties to the nineties, in comparison with the two periods discussed previously, occupies a very unique position in the history of literary study in South Africa. Such uniqueness is demonstrated in both creative and critical output. Not only did the number of literary works increase, but so did insights into literary criticism and debates in the teaching of literature grow. Says Irele (1990:xi) in a related argument:

> [The] current developments within the corpus of African literature, and the intense theoretical debates that have ensued concerning its criticism, make it necessary [...] to return to certain issues [...], in order to place them within the perspective of the present moment [...]. As anyone who has taken interest in the subject is aware, the literary scene in Africa has evolved considerably in the past [...], with not only the appearance of new themes in the work of the older writers but also, and especially, the emergence of a new generation of writers whose work is giving a wholly new direction to literary expression on the continent.

These enormous developments were however not spontaneous, but were dictated by related historical events of the period under consideration. There have, indeed, been marked perceptual and ideological shifts in both the literary works and their criticism. Hence a need for literary scholarship to focus on broader issues than before. Says Irele (1990:xiii) in this regard:

> It remains my conviction that the objective of criticism in the African context cannot be merely to apprehend literature in its nature, in its enormous inwardness, as it were – though this can in other contexts represent a valid preoccupation for the literary scholar – but to provide, as far as it is in the

power of the critic to do so, an understanding of its immediate function, implicit in the character of literature both as symbolic mode and as a means of social discourse, representing by that very fact a privileged channel of inter-subjective communication, with therefore an objective value and significance for the elaboration of a field of vision from within the recesses of the collective consciousness.

These recesses of collective consciousness make it crucial to take into account all cumulative factors that contribute to the shaping of such consciousness. In the present era such factors are no longer peripheral but central to any serious literary discourse. Therefore in the effort to acquire sufficient insight into how the Sesotho novel evolved, including African literature in general, this chapter will consider perceptual and ideological shifts as mechanisms to be used in pondering the novel of this period.

However, considering that the Sesotho novel is but one of the manifestations of the seemingly not so obvious and unacknowledged consciousness raising factors, ample time will be spent on probing some of the issues which are considered crucial for this type of study. This means that we shall firstly consider related and integral socio-political factors that have impact on literary processes. Only afterwards shall we consider the Sesotho novel as the central objective of this study in terms of its signifying function as a people's consciousness.

To achieve this, the study will use Holscher and Romm's (1989:108-37) humanist approach to social development. Their approach reveals an important dimension on ideology, which makes a distinction between ideology and utopia, concepts that are often assumed to carry the same meaning. Holscher and Romm emphasise that for society to develop meaningfully, it must enter into dialogue with *ideology* and *utopia*. To them ideology can no longer be interpreted independently as just:

- a system of beliefs characteristic of particular class or group;
- a system of illusory beliefs – false ideas or false consciousness – which can be

contrasted with true or scientific knowledge;

- the general process of the production of meanings and ideas (Williams, 1977:55).

Rather ideology should be interpreted as a broader concept that also includes utopia. This approach is important for this study and fits well into the theory of literary production, because language as a vehicle of social discourse, and literature as a reflection of society, are considered instrumental either to social development or social under-development.

6.2 Some views on the humanist approach to social development

Holscher and Romm (1989:108) argue firstly that the process of social development cannot be interpreted in isolation from social reality and in this study that reality includes language and literature. Secondly, they argue that if either an ideological alone or an utopian alone approaches are exculusively engaged in the process of interpreting society, without taking into consideration the reality of that society, such exclusive approaches tend to have a dehumanising effect on society. Ideology tends to trap society in the rigid past while utopia tends to trap society in an unrealisable future. They argue therefore that:

> A humanist approach to human living together begins with the assumption that social reality is meaningful in the sense that both the continuation and revision (reconstruction) of institutions in society depend on the meaningful actions of the people who together comprise society. [The] analogy of society as a musical performance which stops when the players stop playing and whose melody depends on the activities of all the players, expresses society as an ongoing meaningful enterprise: "[Structure is] an ongoing, continuing performance which, like musical performance, ceases once the actions and doings constituting it, stop." (p. 109-10).

Citing O'Malley's definition of man as "homo signifier" which, also points to the constituted character of social reality as a structure of meanings, Holscher and

Romm assert that:

> Man signs himself into his world, which takes shape as world for him in his signing there his signature – himself. Thereby, it becomes for him sign of himself [...] (p. 110).

Therefore man can in this way sign himself ideologically by clinging to the past to maintain the status quo, or can sign utopian to look into the future by transforming society into a new one. However if these approaches are followed separately they often do not yield positive results. Consequently, for meaningful social development Holscher and Romm advocate the marrying of the two approaches. To illustrate the importance of this dualistic approach they cite Hoogvelt's interpretation of Mannheim's view on ideology and utopia, where she argues that:

> Mannheim accepts whatever his predecessors had said about ideology being false consciousness, but he adds the distinction that, whereas in the case of ideology the falseness lies in its interpretation of actual reality in old and obsolete terms (terms that "lag behind the times", as it were), in the case of utopian consciousness the interpretation of actual reality derives from interpretation or prognoses about future reality (running ahead of times, as it were) (cf. p. 117).

This study will consequently also consider the ideological and utopian stereotypes as reflected in creative works, researches and pedagogical practice in terms of related socio-political factors of reality pertaining to the Southern African situation between the 1960s and the 1990s.

6.3 Some significant socio-political events between the 1960s - 1990s[1]

The period between the sixties and the nineties can further be considered as a watershed of major political, social and economic changes in South Africa. Such changes that swept across the African continent in general, and through South

---

[1] Some of the events raised here will be revisited later as part of the literary event.

Africa in particular, have made visible impact from the early sixties. These changes have in the main brought a realisation that South Africa was neither an extension of Europe nor an island outside Africa, but that it is part of the African continent. Such a realisation was strengthened by attempts of the Nationalist Party to partition South Africa into racial and language groups.

This partitioning of the South African community as a vigorous attempt to consolidate Afrikaner nationalism through the creation of bantustans, could be interpreted by a perceptive eye as a re-play of the partition of Africa by European colonial powers. There was a need therefore to unite all the oppressed groups in South Africa. Hence the re-emergence and the intensification of the liberation struggle, the re-alignment of the liberation movements as well as the emergence of a strong working class front and student movements.

In fact this was the climax of the resistance that had started earlier. For instance Davenport (1991:347) observes that:

> After the accession of the National Party to power, a great deal of the peasant resistance that followed, and which increased in intensity between 1957 and 1964, resulted from opposition to unpopular legislation introduced after 1948. At the centre of the picture was the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951, which was an attempt to restructure the government of the reserves on more traditional lines, but in practice came to mean the establishment of indirect rule through the medium of subservient and sometimes well-rewarded chiefs, chosen for their preparedness to enforce government policy at the expense of their own popularity.

While the literary history covered in both the production and the study of the Sesotho novel since the turn of the 20th century can be expected to have evolved into a definable tradition by the 1960s, in essence material conditions dictated the opposite. The language of tuition became different from the spoken language in African communities, a change which was transfered to literary study as well. Under normal circumstances the language used by both the author and the critic should be dictated and determined by the target audience, for whom the works in

Africa languages are intended. Otherwise attempts to write and/or to critic which exclude and/or alienate the target audience will be tantamount to the miscarriage of creativity and literary scholarship because:

> Literature does not grow or does not develop in a vacuum; it is given impetus, shape, direction and even area of concern by social, political and economic forces in a particular society [...]. There is no area of our lives that has not been affected by the social, political and expansionist needs of European capitalism (Ngugi, quoted by Killam, 1980:6).

He further asserts that, "Literature is, of course, primarily concerned with what any political and economic arrangement does to the spirit and values governing human relationship" (bid). It stands to reason therefore that social constructs emanating from human relationships are conferred onto the communities via the language(s) they use daily, and in literary discourse as well.

Therefore considering that a novel is regarded as a manifestation of the exploration of such beliefs and social constructs, the author cannot escape the daunting task of exposing distorted values that govern human relationships. The author of the novel is therefore called upon to contribute, via the artistic manipulation of language, to the development of his/her community because writers are "fed linguistically from below. They are fed by the idiom of speech, the rhythm of speech of the people about whom they are writing" (Ngugi, quoted by Killam, 1980:15). Ngugi's argument lays the basis for seeking solutions for problems facing Africans from language and literary practices with a view of enhancing social development.

From the foregoing discussion it is evident that there is a need to change the context of African literary scholarship in general, and the study of the Sesotho novel in particular. Such change should link language and literary study to socio-political, cultural and economic issues. At the present stage of this thesis, it is no longer a debatable issue whether or not material conditions are a factor in both literary production and literary study. The question of the link between literature and society has been sufficiently covered in the previous chapters. Consequently,

adequate knowledge relating to the implications of theories of literary production and their impact on literary study can be assumed.

By implication, historical factors that will be cited below will mainly serve to illustrate that the socio-political, economic and cultural contexts, are essential constitutive parts of material conditions, prior to and during the literary phase under consideration. This is to say that social processes are dialectically linked to literary practice. Therefore if social processes have created problems for society and literary study, lasting solutions can only be found from a clear understanding of those social processes and their impact on literature.

Alluding to a similar assumption, Ntuli & Swanepoel (1993:73) make the following observation with regard to the significance of social processes (history) as they pertain to African literatures in South Africa:

> The 1960s and beyond would bring three related, yet contrasting realities on the African continent in close proximity: freedom, liberation and "freedom". These three, in surprising retrospect, came about almost successively, each with significant causes and consequences for both socio-politics and literature.

These periods are related to what Davenport (1991) refers to as *internal combustion*, *modification and backfire*, and *at the crossroads*. Such an observation does not only acknowledge history as just an additional aspect in literary study. It is also its recognition as an intrinsic literary factor, something that can influence and be influenced by social processes. Ntuli and Swanepoel's observation also demonstrates the importance of history i.e. socio-politics, as the ultimate signified in literary discourse. While this observation can be regarded as an appendage, maybe for extra-textuality, it is considered not only lucid, but crucial as well in this thesis. Its significance is to give a brief historical background on some of the causes that have led to developments described in the above quotation.

The argument pursued here will not, however, follow Ntuli and Swanepoel's

(1993) 'freedom, liberation and "freedom"' mould. In the argument of this thesis three related phases of the liberation struggle are distinguished. They are (a) attempts for the consolidation of apartheid, (b) re-emergence and the intensification of the liberation struggle and (c) the attainment of political freedom. Their ultimate focus will, however, remain their implications for literary study.

6.3.1 Consolidation of apartheid

The initial phase, the early 1960s, of the period under consideration follows closely on the passing of the Bantu Education Act by the white only South African Parliament in 1953. This Act is perceived in this study, and other related studies (cf. Motlhabi, 1989), as a determined effort for the consolidation of apartheid and Afrikaner nationalism. Davemport (1991:346) views this process of consolidating apartheid as 'internal combustion' because at the same time Africans also introduced mechanisms to resist the policies of the regime.

The effect of other Acts which were passed by the same parliament to ensure the total exclusion of Africans as a significant part of the South African community and history, had as a result, merely fallen into place (cf. Davernport, 1991). Among the related Acts one could mention, as an illustration, the Land Acts of 1913 and 1963, the Broadcasting Act of 1936, the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950, the Terrorism Act of 1967 as well as the Publication Act of 1963.

It would also seem that the Nationalist Party regime had hoped that the 1960-3 banning of resistance movements such as the African National Congress (ANC), the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), the South African Communist Party (SACP), etc., would ensure the successful implementation of the plan to balkanise South Africa. The incarceration and exiling of some of the leaders of these movements gave the NP government further confidence to implement its bantustan policy. This policy created homelands for each of the African language groups in South Africa.

The development and administration of bantustans is well documented in other sources and need not be repeated here. The one important issue that merits

attention and has direct bearing on African languages and literature, is the 'administration' of the indigenous languages themselves.

Language Boards were established for each of the African languages in South Africa, as watchdogs of the Nationalist Party regime (cf. Lenake, 1993:129). They monitored language and literature issues under the guise of promoting them. Consequently, "broadly speaking, writers in these languages share many common experiences, especially in the cultural and socio-political spheres" (Ntuli & Swanepoel, 1993:137).

A further observation also made by Ntuli and Swanepoel (1993:137-138), though a tip of an iceberg, gives one a vivid impression regarding what such government policies have brought to bear on African literatures specifically. They argue that:

> ...the political system inevitably replaced the church as the strongest influence on the literatures. The effect of the white monopoly on decision-making power and focus on white ideologies in the struggle for political victory was possibly even more unfortunate than the missionaries' influence, and the overall outcome was a tendency to see the African literatures as the carbon copies of a politically imposed ideology.

This observation points to one of the multifaceted strategies employed in both the manipulation and under-development of African languages and literatures, of which the Sesotho novel is one of them. Censorship also played another important role because the Sesotho novelists, including the majority of African literary scholars, are conspicuously quiet about this era in their creative and critical works.

This apparent silence seems to have provided the Nationalist Party regime with a false illusion of victory, while it was in fact but a lull before the storm. How does one hope to erase history from the minds of the people, and prevent their response to it? The answer to this question leads us to the next sub-section which will attempt to demonstrate that people are influenced by and respond to 'actual' historical conditions as opposed to false ones (cf. Webster, 1993:60).

6.3.2 The intensification of the liberation struggle

Instead of completely squashing black resistance in South Africa by banning liberation movements, the RSA government merely created possibilities for alternative movements. The South African Students Organisation (SASO), was founded in 1969, the Soweto Students Representative Council (SSRC) in 1976, the United Democratic Front (UDF) in 1983 and the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM) in the early 1990s. These were indeed the most testing periods for the Nationalist Party regime and a period of re-alignment of political structures it claimed to have governed and/or given 'quasi independence'. Because such developments were an illusion, rather than reality, coupes and/or attempted coupes also affected some of the bantustans.

Such developments, especially in the context of the argument that literature is viewed as both the expression and a reflection of society, these events were bound to catch the eye of a perceptive literary practitioner. Consequently, such developments should be expected to have had impact on the development of the Sesotho novel as well.

In a normal society, and in accountable academic institutions, such important developments would not have escaped the eye of a vigilant author or the perceptive eye of a credible critic. With such important role players - both as the eyes and analysts of society, political conflict and the question of the possibilities of the resolution of the conflict should have featured prominently in literary scholarship.

A number of possibilities could have emerged: One possibility was firstly, to establish the content of the consolidation of repression by the ruling Nationalist Party regime and its surrogates in the bantustans, on the one hand. On the other hand another possibility was to establish the intensification of the liberation struggle by the oppressed African masses as reflected in Black writing in general, and the Sesotho novel, in particular. Secondly, one would have expected artists, literary practitioners and scholars to reflect on, and to suggest possibilities for the resolution of the political conflict in South Africa. Thirdly, literary scholarship in

African literatures during this era could not have been expected to reflect apathy, naivety and/or indifference to socio-political events. However, regardless of whatever trend literature took, reasons have to be fathomed that ultimately led to the attainment of freedom.

6.3.3 *Attainment of freedom*

The spiral of protest actions triggered by the 16 June 1976 Soweto Uprisings forced the Nationalist Party regime to fight with its back against the wall, and in the process it committed numerous strategic blunders. B.J. Vorster, the last Prime Minister and the first Executive State President of South Africa, attempted to introduce various strategic manoeuvres in an effort to contain resistance in the country and to counter-act international embargo. Inside the country he strived to accelerate reform via the constellation of states. Outside the country he attempted to forge links with other countries, mostly African via his *de'tente* strategy. His attempts were however blotted out by his rejection of the Lusaka Manifesto drawn by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), where the African National Congress (ANC) was represented. The OAU subsequently rescinded any further dealings with the South African regime. On the national scene, the Information Scandal, finally brought Vorster's political career to an end (cf. Davemport, 1997:460-72). The cross-border raids he conducted in pursuance of the liberation movement also contributed to the demise of his political career.

His successor, P.W. Botha, concentrated more on domestic affairs, accelerating the economic viability of homelands and Bantu administration boards. However, his autocratic leadership style and the re-imposition of the state of emergency in 1985 and 1990 ended his political career in 1990. He was succeeded by F.W. de Klerk who attempted to accelerate change through his unbanning of the liberation movement and the release of political prisoners, including the historic release of Nelson Mandela on 11 February 1990[2]. The reforms and changes De Klerk introduced could not satisfy the resolve of the liberation movement for a free

---

[2] Nelson Mandela eventually became the first State President of South Africa.

democratic and non-racial South Africa. F.W de Klerk finally lost his presidency to Nelson Mandela after the 27 April 1994 democratic elections.

The historical events cited above have had immense impact on literary history in South Africa. The oppressed people of South Africa were able to document and fictionalise their experiences through *inter alia* the founding of Ravan Press and Skotaville publishers[3]. Although the literature from these publishing houses is in English, it has had immense impact in raising the consciousness of the oppressed and accelerating the process of liberation. COSATU also contributed by portraying the economic sector and social change through drama (cf. Steadman, 1989).

While African literature in indigenous languages is conspicuously silent about these developments, the Sesotho novel included, there is a lot to learn from that silence. The trend of these developments arose, as it were, from the situation described above, hence a need for a decisive intervention in African literary study to address the situation. Maake's two recent novels *Sejamonna ha se mo qete* (1993) and *Kweetsa ya pelo ya motho* (1995) typically illustrate a need for such an intervention.

6.4 A need for intervention in African literary study

Intervention at its basic level means to come into a situation in order to change it. Modern African literature is a product of such a process, by the European missionaries and settlers. Therefore it would take another similar process to remedy the situation, but this time Africans should do such a form of intervention.

To speak of perceptions regarding African literary study should not be viewed as advocating for a monolithic approach to this art or the naive support of current trends. It is rather a statement that calls for introspection from African literary scholars regarding their craft to end the debate as to what really constitutes 'African literature'. Why should we, at this age, still continue to argue whether or

---

[3] Shava (1989), Steadman (1989) and Selepe (1993) have covered these literary developments in their various studies.

not a Sesotho novel is also an African novel or vice versa? What are the implications of, and what justifies the use of a 'dual' medium in African literary study?

There is an endless list of such concerns, and most of the possible answers can only create a vicious circle. One could nevertheless find solace in Casely Hayford's sobering admonition that "no people could despise its own language, customs, and institutions and avoid national death" (quoted by Anyidoho, 1992:51). The national death referred to in this quotation is in fact multifaceted: It begins when a Mosotho child rejects his/her culture and embraces a foreign culture. It begins when a Mosotho scholar, for personal achievements and prestige, renegades the language and culture which made him/her, and strives to establish reputation in a foreign culture and language. Consequently the success of a Mosotho is no longer measured by his/her own community, but by the so-called international standards, the concept which up to date merely glorifies Western cultural imperialism. This trend then introduces the question of language in literature as a primary concern.

Regardless of what is involved in such debate, it should be conceded that whenever literature and literary scholarship are debated at such a basic level, one is dealing with a strategic cover-up plan to draw attention away from the centre to the periphery. It further implies that the field of African literary study can be identified in terms of particular fixed characteristic trends with inclusionist or exclusionist objectives. This is the imminent question that this study attempts, through the answers it provides, to address.

A characteristic question here is what role did the Sesotho novel play and what character did Sesotho literary scholarship assumes during the period under consideration? As a matter of fact:

> Until we forthrightly address the issues involved, until we formulate and execute bold, intelligent strategies for the creation of an effective language plan-of-action, our otherwise excellent blueprints for material development will largely remain at the talking stage (Anyidoho, 1992:47).

While making such attempts for material development, one ought to be conscious of the fact that literature is one of the many areas that are capable of reflecting any societal processes. It becomes crucial, therefore, for literary scholars to interpret those processes honestly and to give direction to the assumed 'naive' and 'ignorant' indigenous communities. For the effective dissemination of such vital information, then the medium of communication becomes vital in the sense that the use of mother tongue should be extended to as late a stage in education as possible (cf. Mazrui, 1997:39). And this venture should be the prerogative of trustee nations who should finance such programmes through public expense. By analogy, literary scholarship like language, is therefore not only trusted but is also directly or indirectly financed by the public for development purposes.

There is therefore a moral obligation on literary practitioners to give genuine leadership that will ultimately translate into the general development of the African communities they are supposed to serve. Consequently, Cheikh Anta Diop urges African scholars to "recreate our linguistic unity through the choice of an appropriate African tongue promoted to the influence of modern cultural language. Linguistic unity dominates all national life. Without it, national cultural unity is but fragile and illusory" (cf. Anyidoho, 1992:51).

Literary scholars can do this by deepening the understanding of societal problems and interpreting the effectiveness of possible solutions. If this does not happen, then literary scholarship becomes an end in itself, an autonomous entity that becomes a mere mental activity rather than a positive social developmental exercise.

6.5 The profiles of the Sesotho novel from the 1960s to the1990s

The period from the sixties to the nineties has seen a proliferation of more than sixty creative works and a related upswing of critical works on the Sesotho novel. Contributions such as *Comparative Literature and African Literatures* (1993), by Gérard A.S and *Southern African Literature in African Languages* (1993) co-authored by D.B. Ntuli and C.F.Swanepoel, apart from thesis and dissertations,

have already covered the profile of the Sesotho literature.

The wide scope that is covered by these works should suffice to give an aspiring reader a glimpse on the history of development of the Sesotho novel and other issues related to African literature(s) in general. One would however appreciate the fact that such literary texts and critical texts were time- and ideologically-bound. As such these attempts were mostly responding to the demands of their times. They were dictated by the very history of the development of African literature, which seems to constitute a heterogenious rather than a monolithic tradition. Hence the changes in thematic portrayal and critical approaches. Therefore the Sesotho novel, which is a focus in this study, could not escape similar changing trends. For instance, Barnett (1983:9) gives the following version of the history of the development of African literatures:

> Black creative writing in South Africa began in the middle of the nineteenth century with the missionaries, whose primary purpose was to publish reading matter, rather than by, the black man. It did not matter whether the translations of the Bible and religious works were written by whites or blacks, provided that the writers were proficient in the language in which they were writing and likely to reach the largest number of potential converts. When black writers did begin to produce work they were certainly encouraged to do so, and the mission press published many works. The Paris Evangelical Mission press at Morija and the Church of Scotland mission station press at Lovedale became the centres of early black literature in the African languages.

A further dimension that Barnett adds to the African novel, although mainly focussing on Black South African literature in English, also has bearing on the Sesotho novel. He says:

> Almost from the beginning of fiction writing [...] by black South Africans, it was a situation rather than individual characters and their interaction that interested authors (op cit. p.113).

Demonstrating the format that this perception ultimately gave to black South African literature, Barnett continues to explain that:

> Fiction consequently took the form of protest against apartheid, a subject that lends it to short fiction rather than to sustained writing, unless the author follows the activities of a character from situation to situation. Since the situation was always one experienced by the writer himself, the longer works were autobiographical rather than fictitious (op cit. p.114).

The views expressed above reinforce a notion that in the African novel it is material conditions that affect people, not just characteristic features of a literary work, which inspire authors. Lenake makes another observation with regard to situations portrayed in the novels that have been published during this era. He recognises that the continuation of historical themes seems to have endured (cf. Gérard, 1993:130-133).

However, Lenake's observation seems to be content with merely slotting in the Sesotho novels published during this era into traditional themes such as *Makgoweng motif, detective story, conflict between traditional and modern life*. He completely ignores their socio-political implications. The root causes and the social implications of such themes are never sufficiently explained nor deeply probed, if ever.

The contribution made by Ntuli and Swanepoel (1993) is also significant and can chiefly be regarded as a slight shift from the mode of thinking expressed in the foregoing paragraph. Such a trend neither comes as a surprise nor is it out of step because it is dictated by tradition of literary scholarship during the period under consideration. Ntuli and Swanepoel also regard novels published during this era as characterised by historical themes and the clash between cultures. They however, go beyond these generalised themes and point out to the effects of industrialisation and urbanisation as well as related social problems (op.cit. p.90-98).

In this study we shall consider a sample Sesotho novels in relation to the social

implications of themes. The dominant themes are historical and social (educational, socio-cultural and economical).

6.5.1 Some trends in the Sesotho historical novels

Most, if not all, historical novels in Sesotho derive their inspiration from the institution of traditional leadership - kings and chiefs linked to Lesotho, so to say. By the sixties British rule in Lesotho was completely entrenched to a point where the role and powers of traditional leaders, in running the affairs of their subjects, have been significantly curtailed. In South Africa, where Afrikaner nationalism with its apartheid policies was on the rise, the role and powers of traditional leaders were also affected. One would have expected therefore that the issue of traditional leadership could no longer serve as an inspiration or appealing theme in works of fiction from the sixties and beyond.

One possible explanation for this development could be ascribed to the fact that 'historical fiction' could also be considered as having a socio-political undercurrent. For instance, considering that the contemporary media policies denied the publication of 'political material', historical writing and analysis could have been regarded as an alternative albeit a second choice[4].

As a result, contrary to expectation, no less than six novels were produced on this theme, over and above works of poetry and drama. One important point to make

here is that although such works are constructed around the traditional leadership in Lesotho, they still have relevance to the Basotho in the Republic of South Africa, who share common ancestory with those in Lesotho. Guma produced *Morena Mohlomi, mora Monyane* (1960), *Tshehlana tseo tsa Basia* (1962) and *Bitleng la Rasenate* (1987). Majara produced *Morena wa thaba* (1963), Majara, *Morwetsan'a Moshate* (1964) and Mopeli-Paulus' *Moshoeshoe Moshoaila* appeared later in 1966.

---

[4] Indebted to Prof. CF Swanepoel. Also consider Selepe's (1997:80-4) study, *Some implications of media policy and ethics in literary production: A preliminary survey of Sesotho literature.*

Some of the related works are Malefane's drama, *Maru* (1963), constructed around the Zulu king, Dingane, and Lesoro's poetry, *Tau ya ha Zulu* (1963) which deals with the life of another Zulu king, Shaka. Masiea's *Mmualle*, which is based on inter-tribal marriages between royal families, saw light in 1984. Another work is Booysen's drama *Sekhukhune* (1989) in which the author claims to have been inspired by Mofolo's novel, *Tjhaka*. This drama is constructed around the life of the Bapedi chief, Sekhukhune. Lastly, it is Mohapi's drama *Leru le lefubedu* (1994), which, if it is not inter-textuality, seems to have been inspired by Guma's *Bitleng la Rasenate*.

One would of course also acknowledge a sprinkling of some controversial works of poetry, because of the political climate at the time, which were constructed around some chiefs of the then bantustans. One such work is J.L. Mokoena's *Mollelwa, sefaha sa Basotho* (1978). Like Mokoena, other emerging poets such as N.S. Litabe and K.P.D. Maphalla also found themselves on the wrong foot of the political mainstream (cf. Lenake in Gerard 1993:133). This void of creditable praise poetry has nevertheless been compensated by Moiloa's masterpiece epic, *Thesele, ngwana Mmamokgatjhane* (1992).

It comes as no surprise therefore that we encounter a mixture of both historical data and fictional imaginativeness. This trend of fictional imaginativeness has generally been typical of the composition of young Basotho initiates who emulate their previous heroes in the praises they composed for themselves. What they did was to emulate those (historical) heroes in terms of their own life struggles and conquests in relation to their own struggles. In the process of singing and narrating such praises, the young initiates were also re-establishing their cultural origin and reconstructing their history.

6.5.1.1 Morena Mohlomi, mora Monyane (Guma)

Of all the authors who attempted to fictionalise the history of the Basotho, Guma stands head and shoulder above them. *Morena Mohlomi, Mora Monyane* (1960) is about the life history of one of the early kings of the Basotho. According to Atkinson (1993:22), Mohlomi was born in 1710 and died in 1816. He is the son of

Napo, a descendent of the Bakoena, who was also one of their leaders. He is known for his wisdom and diplomacy. He is the one who started to build the Basotho nation by peaceful means and not war. It is from Mohlomi where Moshoeshoe learned the expression *kgotso ke kgaitsedi* (peace is one's sister) (ibid. p.26).

Mohlomi's birth has caused a few problems for the Bakwena. He was born a twin and this created problems as to who would succeed Napo. The one view was that one of the twins should be killed to avoid power struggle in the future. The other was that both should be allowed to live because the Bakwena have already had a similar case and no problem was experienced. The latter view prevailed and Mohlomi ultimately emerged as an heir to his father's throne.

Mohlomi distinguished himself as a leader in various ways. As a young man he was a good hunter and a good storyteller. His peers who enjoyed his interesting stories always surrounded him. When the time came to take over from his father, he continued to amaze people. He was unlike many kings who spent most of their time pre-occupied with the affairs of their subjects. Mohlomi spent most of his time travelling and visiting other nations. He was also a traditional doctor, the craft he learned from Rasebolai. Apart from healing many diseases, Mohlomi could also cause rainfall. One of his important contributions is the advice he gave to Moshoeshoe that made the latter one of the most venerated kings among the Basotho. Mohlomi gave him the following advice:

> Mor'aka, u tla ba morena e moholo. Leha ho le jwalo, u tla lokela hore u ithute ho busa sechaba sa hao ka bohlale. Ho molemo ho pola mabele ho feta ho leotsa lerumo. U lokela ho thusa sechaba sa hao ho phela ka khotso eseng ka lintoa. Haeba u ka phethisa sena, batho ba tla u rata, 'me ba be ba u mamele ho isa pheletsong ea bophelo ba hao (Atkinson, 1993:26).
>
> (My son, you'll be a great king. In spite of this you'll have to learn to rule

your nation with wisdom. It is better to thrash corn that to sharpen spears. You have to teach your nation to live in peace and not war. If you do this, people will love and listen to you until your death).

The historical account, which Guma portrays around Mohlomi's life, demonstrates that the early history of the indigenous African people is not necessarily that of savagery and backwardness. It is also a history of peace and progress where various people did not only meet when they waged war but also met when they were building friendship. While this historical account is fictionalised, it nonetheless remains a hallmark of the culture the Basotho have cultivated among them. It is an unblemished history, which demonstrates that peace and progress do not necessarily depend on outside agents but can also emerge from within as long as people can apply their minds correctly. This novel in which the story is constructed around known historical figures, events and places, is a unique account of one of the unacknowledged ambassadors of peace and progress in the sub-continent.

Another important dimension that Guma brings in this story is the origin of *madimo* (cannibals). According to him, Mohlomi first learned about the cannibals among the Bavenda people in the northern Transvaal or the present Northern Province. That was long before the *difaqane* wars, which were caused by Tjhaka's wars and led to famine. As a result of this famine some people started eating other human beings. Guma does however confirm the famine caused by the *difaqane* as another cause of cannibalism as we shall demonstrate in the next novel.

6.5.1.2 Tshehlana tseo tsa Basia (Guma)

The other novel is *Tshehlana tseo tsa Basia* where Guma again portrays the unblemished history of the Basotho that was untouched by colonialism. Unlike in the case of Mohlomi, here Guma portrays the history characterised by strife, deceit and power mongering. In this novel Guma portrays the significant role played by the Basia damsels, Ntlokgolo and Manthatisi who were successively married by the Batlokwa chiefs Montwedi and Mokotjo respectively. The story is in this way also constructed mostly around historical characters, events and places.

Two clans, the Batlokwa who lived around Harrismith and the Basia who lived around Zastron, feature prominently in the story. Guma also uses many known names such as Moshoeshoe, Tjhaka, Rakotsoane, etc., places such as Harrismith, Phiritona (Heilbron), Matlakeng (Zastron), etc., which give his novel an historical character.

Motonosi is the Batlokwa chief who is succeeded by his elder son Montwedi. Montwedi marries a daughter of the Basia. Montwedi and Ntlokgolo, the senior wife, could not have children until very late. They are later blessed with a baby boy, Mokotjo, but Montwedi dies shortly thereafter. After Montwedi's death Montwetsana, the former's younger brother attempts to usurp the chieftainship by marrying Ntlokgolo. Ntlokgolo refuses his advances. This refusal leads to bitterness and feud. Ntlokgolo is forced to flee away to save hers and her son's lives. She is helped by Mantwa – a loyal group to Montwedi to return to her people, the Basia who are still living around Matlakeng.

Mokotjo grows up among the Basia and after his initiation he is again helped by the Mantwa to succeed his father as chief of the Batlokwa. While at Matlakeng, Mokotjo meets his cousin, Monyaduwe whom he later marries. The latter is re-named Manthatisi by the Batlokwa. Mokotjo also dies while still young but the events, which followed his father's death, are not repeated. Manthatisi takes over as the interim leader of the Batlokwa. Under her leadership the Batlokwa fight many battles and grow to become one of the big tribes. A desire to find a fortress leads the Batlokwa to the present Lesotho where they find a stronghold at Buthabuthe. Moshoeshoe has just left Buthabuthe and has moved to Thaba Bosiu.

The tribal wars, which were fought at the time and Tjhaka's reign of terror, leads to famine and subsequently the emergence of *madimo* (cannibals). Another effect of the *difaqane* is also the breaking up of tribal unity as well as merging of other tribes. For instance while it is a well-known fact that Moshoeshoe built the Basotho nation out of splinter tribes, Guma also mentions that the Batlokwa too have brought other tribes into their fold through conquest or by granting them refuge.

The events narrated in this novel have a bearing on what was to happen later in the history of the Basotho i.e. forcefully introducing them to the capitalist mode of production. While the historical events that have been portrayed so far are confined to the tribal domain, events to come are to be of an international nature. In the novel, Bitleng la Rasenate (1987), Guma explores the latter dimension of the Basotho history.

6.5.1.3 Bitleng la Rasenate (Guma)

Bitleng la Rasenate is the latest novel written by Guma that depicts the latest history of the Basotho, which explains the historical events that have led to the present conditions in Lesotho. Guma creates his story around the events leading to war and those after the war, as well as the effects of the historic *Ntwa ya dithunya* (The battle of the guns) on the life of the Basotho nation. The story demonstrates how the interference of British rule has succeeded in subjugating the Basotho by causing division within their ranks. The invasion of Lesotho by the British makes some of them to believe that the only way to survive is not to resist their forces while others resolve to fight to the bitterest end. The division wrought by this invasion becomes manifest in the leadership structures of the Basotho nation.

The Basotho are divided on the question of whether or not they should hand over of the guns that they have acquired legally to the British authorities. The British exploit this indecision to their own advantage by communicating only with the faction that is willing to hand over the guns. The faction that is against the handing over of guns to the British then decides to fight. It also prevents the other faction from handing over the guns. This was the beginning of the fierce battles among the Basotho as they are no longer united by their allegiance to their monarchy.

The faction, Mashwelatoka, that opposes the handing over of the guns led by Lerothodi and the other, Maloyale, has an implicit support for Letsie who is recognised by the British as the only legitimate voice of the Basotho. We say their support to Letsie is implicit because he delays to take a position on the question of the handing over of the guns. It is only when the battle has become a full-scale

war and after Captain Spriggs is sent to come and intervene that Letsie pledges his support for the decision of the British. By then Letsie's forces are on the brink of defeat by the British re-enforcements.

The effects of the war are evident and a cease-fire is the only option available but it is to come at a price. Instead of reciprocating Letsie's goodwill the British punish the whole of the Basotho nation because of the actions of Lerotholi's rebels. The Basotho are made to pay the costs of the war with cattle and when the required number of cattle could not be raised the areas of Matatiele and Herschel are annexed by the colonial government.

Captain Spriggs brokers the cease-fire and Letsie ends the war but this process does not benefit the Basotho in any way. Reflecting on the document announcing the cease-fire and the accompanying penalty, Guma says:

> Ngolo lena la kahlolo la fihla ka morao ho nako e telele. La ya ballwa hona mane Maseru, marena a le teng kaofela, e le kgetlo la pele a teana ha esale ntwa e ne e qalehe. Dintlha tsa lona tsa bohlokwa di ne di le tharo. Ya pele e ne e re marabele a ipitsang Mashwela toka a kwenehetse mmuso a ba a o lwantsha. Ka baka leo mmuso wa tlameha ho bula banka ya ho jara ditshenyehelo tsa ntwa eo. Ya bobedi, e re Maloyale a bitswang Mateketwa, a ile a amohuwa di-tsa-bona, a ba a baballwa ke mmuso ka ntho tsohle. Ya boraro ke ditshenyehelo tse ding kaofela tsa ntwa kaofela ha di se di kopane tsa akaretswa ka dikete tse hlano tsa dikgomo. Ha thwe ena ke yona kotlo ya pele ya bona, tse ding di tla tloha di bolelwa. Tefo ya dikgomo tse badilweng e honyelle kaofela ka nako e le nngwe. Ha ho ka ba jwalo, naha e tla dula e ntse e le jwalo matsohong a bona. Empa ha di sa honyelle kaofela, naha e tla kgepholwa, ho nkuwe koto se seng sa yona ho lefa melato e setseng (p.73).
>
> (This judgement letter came after a long time. It was read at Maseru where all the chiefs were present, the first since the beginning of the war. It contained three important points. The first one stated that the rebels who called themselves Mashwelatoka have rebelled against the government

and even fought against it. For that reason the government was forced to open a bank that would enable it to meet the expenses incurred in that war. The second point stated that Maloyale, who were called Mateketwa, were dispossessed of their belongings and had to take care of them. The third related to all other expenses of the war that amounted to five thousand herds of cattle. It was stated that this was the first penalty and that the other would follow. The number of cattle required had to be paid at once in full. If that happened, the land will remain theirs. But if they failed, part of the land equivalent to the deficit would be taken.)

The content of the penalty as portrayed by Guma demonstrates undisguised deceit and cruelty of the British colonial rule. It refers to expenses, which the British have incurred by protecting the loyal faction whose property has also been confiscated by Maswelatoka. It makes no mention of a similar act that the British have perpetrated against the Basotho in general by compelling them to surrender their legally acquired guns. The other unspecified costs also demonstrate how the British are bent on milking the Basotho dry so they should depend permanently on the former's generosity forever. This implies that if the Basotho had the disclosed costs, the hidden costs would have been used to achieve the same objective i.e. to take away everything the Basotho have thus preventing them from fighting back again.

The irony of the whole scenario is that both the British and the Basotho in either defending what they have or regaining what they have lost commit similar wrongs. In the end the British emerge as both the complainants and the judges while the Basotho are reduced to outright villains whose actions cannot be rationalised. Using George Tladi's observation in one of the court hearings before the war, Guma gives a convincing answer to this question. He says:

Ho hlakile hore molato ke mmala ona wa rona oo re o filweng ke Modimo. Ha le re thetsa kwana dikolong le ye le re batho ba a lekana. Empa eka bophelong ba ka ntle, ba bang ba lekana ho feta ba bang. Ho na le molao wa ba matla, le o mong hape wa ba fokolang. Re amohuwa dibetsa feela

hobane re le matla re bile re fokola, mme ntho eo e bohloko (p.50).

(It is quite clear that the problem is our colour that God has given us. When you lie to us at school you often say that people are equal. But in real life some are more equal than others. There are laws for the strong, and other laws for the weak. Guns are being taken from us because we are not strong and are weak, and this is painful.)

This is a humbling observation that characterises the pattern of life throughout the world: obey the strong and oppress the weak. However, experience has shown that generally, the strong are the weak that conform, and the weak are the strong who refuse to conform. The price paid by the latter is to be jostled out of all forms of advancement to prove their 'weakness'. Guma portrays this situation by contrasting the position of the rebels (Mashwelatoka) and the volunteers (Maloyale) as follows:

Boemo bona ba marabele ha bo bapiswa le ba dikampong, bo ne bo itshwanela hantle feela le ba phokojwe e bolelwang ditshomong tsa Basotho. Ho thwe ya teana le ntja e nonneng haholo, boya ba yona bo bile bo phatsima. Phokojwe ya e botsa hore na dijo e di fumana kae hara lee? Ya re e di fuwa ke monga yona. Phokojwe ya e botsa hore a na le yona a ka e fa na? "E, a ka o fa". Tsa tloha ho ya teng. Empa tseleng phokojwe ya elellwa hore ntja ha e na boya molaleng hoba e ne e tsamaya e ntse e e qamaka, e tsota monono wa yona. Ya e botsa hore na bo entse jwang? Ntja ya sheba fatshe ya re bo phumotswe ke lerapo hoba monga yona o a e holeha bosiu. Phokojwe ya hlahafala, ya re, "O reng? O re o hle a o holehe ka thapo, a o sitise ho ikela moo o ratang? Tjhe, mokane, boela ho monga hao le dijo tsa hae tsa thapo ya mehla. Nna nka mpa ka bolawa ke tlala ho ena le hore ke tele bolokolohi ba ka". Phokojwe ya rialo e peralatsa mosela e boela morung, serameng le tlaleng ya bolokolohi, ha ntja e tsoka wa yona e boela ho monga yona (p.71).

(The situation of the rebels in comparison with those in the camps, was similar to that of the fox in the Sesotho folk tales. They say that it met with a

very fat dog, whose hair was even shining. The fox asked it where it got food from during that period of starvation. It replied that it got food from its master. Then the fox asked whether it could also be given food. "Yes, he can also give you". Then they walked together to the dog's master. But along the way the fox realised that the dog had no hairs around the neck because it fascinated by its fatness. It asked the dog what had happened to it. The dog looked down and explained that it had been removed the thong strap because its master chains it at night. The fox was bewildered and asked, "What do you say? Do you really mean that he chains with a thong and prevents you from going where you want to? No, my friend, go back to your master; to his food and the daily chain. I'd rather starve instead of sacrificing my freedom." The fox uttered these words lifting its tail and going back into the forest, to the cold and starvation of freedom, while the dog wagged its tail on its way back to its master.)

The British created a situation that would force choices that would rip the Basotho, in Lesotho, nation assunder. The British design the situation that would enable them to reward those who obey them and punish, in various ways, those who are perceived as disobedient. Such a choice, as inferred earlier, has no moral basis and it is merely for survival.

This is a kind of choice which many Africans, the wretched of the earth, are still faced with today. If they want to become part of the mainstream of world developments, they have to prepare to be chained forever. If they choose freedom, they have to be prepared to starve forever. These are some of the consequences of the 1884-5 Berlin Conference whose resolutions have *inter alia* reduced Africa to the perpetual status of subservience in all spheres of life (cf. Fowler & Smit, 1973:91-2).

Bitleng la Rasenate, as opposed to Guma's two earlier novels, has the unmistakable tone of bitterness. One could assume that this bitterness is a result of experience that proved that there is not much that Africa and Africans could do about their situation as long as the interests of the western powers direct affairs.

This experience is that the former colonial powers and the western world are prepared to give handouts to sustain poverty but they are not prepared to eliminate it through appropriate and sustainable developmental programmes. The western world is also prepared to develop individuals but not nations, even if such selective delopment could lead to national suicide. Their conditional aid programmes are not determined by need but by preferences, and they reserve the sole right to decide on who to help, how and when. Recent developments in South Africa have also proved this trend. Whenever a key appointment of an African is made in key positions, the world market would react negatively. The appointments of Trevor Manuel and Tito Mboweni as Minister of Finance and Governor of the Reserve Bank respectively, have prompted similar reactions. Seepe, who interprets this trend as racist, says in this regard:

> One could easily refer to the stereotypes and jitters that almost always follow the appointments of blacks in areas considered no-go areas such as the judiciary, financial institutions, major businesses, and white institutions of higher learning (City Press, 3 Jan. 1999:7).

Guma's adequately researched fictionalisation of the Basotho history makes one of the unique contributions to the Sesotho novel. In the first two novels, *Morena Mohlomi, mora Monyane* and *Tshehlana tseo tsa Basia*, Guma locates the history of the Basotho in a subdued tone from their ancestral land in parts of the present Free State province. In *Tshehlana tseo tsa Basia*, in particular, Guma demonstrates that, areas such as Phiritona (Heilbron), Harrismith and Zastron were part of the Basotho land.

This claim is supported by the fact that most of the important names in the Batlokwa history, remain part of the present history of the Batlokwa who are found in the southern parts of the former Qwaqwa bantustan, in the eastern Free State. The Sekonyela lineage, are district chiefs in the Thibella district of Tsheseng. One of the first high schools at Tsheseng has been named after the Batlokwa chieftainess, Manthatisi. In the village of Phomolong east of Manthatisi High School there was in the early eighties also a traditional councillor called Selepe.

All these names are consistent with the historical names of the Batlokwa used by Guma in his novel.

6.5.2 The profile of other Sesotho novels

This sub-section deals with novels, other than historical novels, which portray other social issues. While they might be inspired by historical and socio-political issues, these novels cannot be classified as such. They tend more to portray the effects of such issues rather than articulate them directly.

6.5.2.1 Nna, Sajene Kokobela CID (Ntsane)

Ntsane, another prolific Mosotho author, constructs the story of his novel, *Nna, Sajene Kokobela CID* (1965), around the effects of the Second World War on the Basotho. It is not just a simple detective story or an illustration of ritual murder (cf. Maake, 1997). Afterall reference to a detective story sounds anomalous because the Basotho by then had never had a policing culture. In fact this story seems to be a prelude to Guma's theme in *Bitleng la Rasenate* where a Mosotho is pitted against a Mosotho. This could also be interpreted, as the early version of what has popularly became known as black on black violence in South Africa.

The Basotho had been conscripted to fight Hitler's Germany during the Second World War and were promised proportionate reward for their contribution. However, this reward turned out to be bicycles for the Basotho soldiers while their white counterparts were rewarded with tracts of land. Using Mafethe's dialogue with Kokobela about the latter's role, Ntsane illustrates the effect of these events on the psyche of the marginalised people as follows:

> Eseng hore o hopola hore ke batho baa bao lona mapolesa le hlolang le ba tlatlapa ka ho ba buisa hampe kapa ho ba kgahlapetsa jwaloka hoja ke dintho tse se nang moya? Le ikentse diphiri hara dikonyana, le thusa batho bao morero wa bona e leng ho senya setjhaba, ho se amoha ditokelonyana tsa sona le hona ho se fumanehisa, ho se tuba le ho se tlatlapa ka ditsela tse ngata? Le re ekaba dintho tsee kaofela di monate? Bosoleng kwana re ne re iswa moo ho tjhesang, kgabong ya ntwa, empa ha ho jewa menono,

tholwana tsa tlholo, ditjhelete, re teelwa ka thoko, ho feta bo-Nnyeo ka bo-Nnyeo, bao mosebetsi wa bona e leng ho itulela letsatsi lohle ditenteng mona, ba tsuba, ba eja, ba enwa, ba ithabisa ka mekgwa e mengata. Ke senyeha pelo ha ke ntse ke bona bolotsana le bobe bona kaofela. Ho thwe dintho ke disajene – ke yona ntho eo ke sa o batleng ka yona ha ke ntse ke hopola meleko eo ya disajene tse neng di re sotla, di ipona botho ka rona (p.85).

(Don't you think you have mistaken me to be one of these who you policemen often abuse by speaking unkindly with them as if they were things without soul? You have turned yourselves into hyenas among the lambs, helping people whose resolve is to destroy the nation, to take away their minimum rights and to make them poor, to abuse and molest them in various ways? Do you think all of these things are pleasant? In the army we were placed in the front line, in the thick of the battle, but when it comes to reward, the fruits of conquest, money, we are sidelined, the so-and-so whose work was smoking, eating, drinking, enjoying themselves in various ways, go through. I get hurt when I look at all the deceit and evil. It was said they were sergeants – that is why I hate you when I think about the bad manner in which those sergeants treated us, thinking they were better than us.)

To Mafethe, on the one hand these events form the context of his actions. Kokobela on the other hand, is motivated by a different understanding of the results of the same circumstances: The manner in which police officers treated people who needed help as well as his resolve to track down and apprehend those who perpetrate evil in society. Ntsane uses Kokobela's monologue to illustrate this fact:

Ho tloha mohlang oo ka inahanna [sic], ka inahana haholo mme halelele. Ka re batho re phedisana hampe lefatsheng. Ha re behilwe ditulong tse phahameng re etsa ba bang hampe, re ba buisa ka kgarumelo, re ba etsa dintho tse se nang moya. Hape batho re leshano, re bolotsana, re a

tlatlapana, re a senyana, mme re etsana hampe. Bosiu bo bong ka hla ka bo qeta ho hang ke sa ka ka kopanya dintshi, e le hore ke sitwa ho fihlela hantle hore motho ke ntho e jwang. Keng ha a le makgenefa tjena, empa ho thwe o entswe ka setshwantsho sa Modimo, moya o motle, o hlwekileng, o se nang leeme, lonya, mona, boloi le bona bolotsana? Ka re ho nna bolotsana lefatsheng e ka kgona bo fediswe, bo ripitlwe jwaloka dira tse senyang, tse jalang moferefere, tse senyang kgotso moo kgotso e leng teng (p.3).

(From that day I started thinking, I thought deeply and for a long time. I said that as people we treat one another badly in this world. When we hold promotional positions we treat others badly, shouting at them, turning them into things with no soul. Furthermore people are liars, deceitful, scandal mongering, and evildoers. One night I could not sleep at all. I was trying to understand human nature. Why is he so wicked while it is said he is made in the image of God, good and pure in spirit, the spirit free from discrimination, evil doing, witchcraft and deceit. I told myself that evil has to be stopped in this world, be destroyed like destructive enemies who cause trouble, and destroy peace where it exists.)

These contrasting positions form the basis of the problem in this novel and the resultant modus operandi used by Mafethe and Kokobela. Kokobela uses the structures and resources of his British masters to legitimise the unjust colonial government. Mafethe on the other hand does not have such structures or resources. He relies on his conscience and determination. It is another story of the chained fat dog and the starving free jackal. Kokobela is chained by the unjust laws of his masters but is well protected and well fed. Mafethe has the freedom of conscience but does not have the protection of the law because he challenges the makers of the very law. This makes him a villain and a fugitive who has to be tracked down and brought to book under the laws made by people who are equally evil.

It was evil for the colonialists to impose their will on the Basotho and to sustain

their dominance over them by causing division within their ranks. This is the epitome of the divide and rule tactics that have been characteristic of unjust regimes and their social structures. Such practices have not been confined to the macro-levels only. They have also filtered down to micro- and personal levels. This is the aspect Ntsane is trying to illustrate.

This in practice means to feed the conformist and to starve the rebels irrespective of what it entails. In our era the war which is being fought is no longer against Nazism but against western imperialism. The battlefront is African languages and literatures. Consequently, Africans are made to fight in the war that is not theirs. It is on this battlefront that African scholars clash with their kith and kin.

That is why indigenous African scholars are moving into the 21st century still embroiled in the debate about the medium of teaching African languages and literatures. The irony is that all of them are born of African descent and have an African language as a home language, and they maintain that they are Africans. However, when it comes to the bread and butter issues, they denounce the capability of their languages in scientific discourse in favour of other languages. They have structures and resources at their disposal and they are well fed. The other camp does not have such resources, save its collective conscience. It is starved in various ways and the consequences have a rippling effect on its aspiring community that is excluded from development by imposing language barriers.

There are a number of arguments that illustrate how one can be persuaded to become either a chained fat dog or a lean but free jackal. Most of such arguments are placed out of context to have a desired effect. The following argument is typical of this observation:

> Multilingualism and the use of African languages as media of instruction are not new. They were pursued in the 1950s by the Nationalist government. The parents rejected them most categorically. This does not mean that the parents did not value their languages, rather that such languages did not enable their children to compete favourably with fellow whites in the job

market (Msimang, 1996:46).

Firstly, this argument relates to an era when language was used to disenfranchise African people and to turn them into language entities, not human beings, in the former bantustans. Secondly, to use 'fellow whites' as the standard for competition is absurd. Black people do not necessarily need fellow whites to compete in the job market. They can compete among themselves. Moreover in this era of multilingualism, most blacks have language advantage over most fellow whites.

If this factor is taken into account, competition in the job market is stiffer between blacks and blacks rather than between blacks and whites. It will therefore not be out of step to argue that, in this era blacks have become a standard for competition in the job market. After all the majority of the work force and the clientele in South Africa are blacks who are either semi-literate or illiterate, and can in most cases only access information and communicate effectively via the medium of an African language. It is therefore no longer a situation of Africans communicating in other languages, but also speakers of other languages communicating in African languages.

Furthermore to link the medium of instruction in general to the medium of instruction in other subjects is to miss a point. This becomes even more serious if the content of university material is used to justify the continuation of teaching African languages and literatures in foreign media (op. cit. p.47). It seems to be a polite way of saying that African scholars are not capable of translating and transferring information from other language sources into their own languages for educational purpose. Nonetheless, this is a forgivable oversight. In the same breath, Dr Neville Alexander can be pardoned for the wrong-headed notion of the harmonisation of African languages because he does not feel them in his pulse. Trew's (1993:73) observation on the need of African language services will suffice to lay this argument to rest. He says:

> ....in the context of rapidly expanding demand for translation in South African languages, and given the prospect of enhanced language rights in

South Africa's constitution, there is a rather urgent need to develop a professionalised infrastructure of language services in African languages.

The rest of the Basotho novelists construct their stories around a variety of social and related issues. However, the deeper meanings of themes portrayed still reveal social construct and stereotypes conferred on them. The social forces at play are therefore still crucial in their interpretation.

6.5.2.2 Tshiu tseo (Maphalla)

The works of Maphalla, one of the leading Basotho authors of this period, are a mixture of lament and protest. It is only unfortunate that he seems to be trapped in these subjects to an extent that his levels of maturity as an author becomes suspect. Nevertheless he has made a most outstanding literary contribution in Sesotho.

In his novel, *Tshiu tseo* (1982), Maphalla illustrates the hardships of poverty and of losing parents at a tender age. This is coupled with the resilience of fighting back against odds and the undiminishing faith in God. Using a first person narration Maphalla portrays his theme in a very emotional manner and he occasionally interprets situations for the reader.

Using the hero of the novel, Mohlophehi, Maphalla illustrates two contradictory aspects of human nature namely, good and evil. After the death of his father, Kgalala, Mohlophehi is forced to start working part-time at the age of ten to supplement his mother's income. He is treated inhumanly by his employer, a Mr. Van Zyl, and his wife. Says Maphalla, portraying Mohlophehi's experiences:

> Ke qadile ho sebetsa ha monnamoholo e mong tjena wa lekgowa ya neng a bitswa van Zyl. O ne a le bohale he eo monnamoholo wa lekgowa, empa ha e le mosadi wa hae yena o ne a etjha. O ne a se bohale o ne a tuka malakabe. E ne e se motho, e ne e le sebabole hantle. O ne a se bohale feela, o ne a bile a le lonya, a le pelo e mpe, a bile a le lekgonatha. O ne a ruile ntja e bohale tjena, eo ke neng ke e tshaba lebekebeke. Mohla a kenweng ke bosawana, o ne a ntshaeletsa ka yona, ebe ke sa tla matha le

ho bokolla. A utlwe monate he aumisisi, a tshehe letsheho le mona la hae le kgohlahetseng, ho be ho hlahe leino la ho qetela la mohlahare. Baahelwana ba hae ba ne ba hlaha ka difenstere, ebe le bona ba ya tsheha ha ba bona ntja e ntabolela dikobo. Ebe o tla utlwa monate haholo he aumisisi, a ntshaeletse le ho feta.

"Vat hom, Wagter! Vat hom die stouter!" ke aumisisi eo ka ntswe leo e kang o kwentse tapole e ntse e tjhesa (p.8).

(I started working for a certain old white man called van Zyl. That old white man was full of fury but his wife was worse. She was not only full of fury but she spit fire. She was not a human being but she was real sulphur. She was not only full of fury, she was also conceited, evil and selfish. She owned a vicious dog that I feared very much. When she was crazy she would set it on me, then I would start running and crying. The old lady would enjoy the spectacle, using her wicked laughter, until the last tooth in her jaws could be seen. Her neighbours would peep through the windows, and joined in her laughter while the dog was tearing my clothes. Then she would enjoy the spectacle more and continue setting the dog on me.

"Catch him, Wagter! Catch the naughty one!" says the old lady with a mumbling voice.)

Similar incidents of indignity also happen when Mohlophehi is employed by Mr. Smit and later a Portuguese who owned a restaurant. Apart from being treated as if he is not a human being, Mohlophehi is also exploited. Practices such as child labour and racism are akin to the historical period of the story.

However, what is important about this novel is that Maphalla does not limit ill treatment of other people to race. He portrays it as part of human nature. Mohlophehi is also ill-treated by his teacher at school. Later, he and his younger sister, Disebo, get similar treatment from the family of their father's younger brother. The latter comes to occupy his elder brother's home after the death of Mohlophehi's mother. Illustrating this scenario, using Mohlophehi, Maphalla says:

Ke ne ke eya sekolong hoseng, ebe ha sekolo se etswa ke titimela mosebetsing, moo ke neng ke se ke sebetsa ha Lepotoketsi lane leo mme a neng a le sebeletsa.

....Ke ne ke atisa ho kgutla mosebetsing ka hora ya botshelela, mme ke ne ke fihla lapeng ke kgathetse haholo ka ha mosebetsi wa khefing o sa fe motho nako ya ho dula fatshe. Ke ne ke fumana boPakiso le Ditaba ba se ba se ba le teng lapeng, ka ha bona ba ne ba kgutla ka hora ya bohlano.

....Ka mehla ha ke ne ke fihla hae, ke ne ke fumana boPakiso ba se ba orile mollo, ebe mmangwane o nthoma lebenkeleng. Ke ne ke kgutla mosebetsing e se e ntse e le bosiu, ka hoo ha ke kgutla lebenkeleng e ne e se e le bosiu bo boholo (p.45-6).

(I used to go to school very early, then after school I would rush to my part-time work, a Portuguese who was the former employer of my mother.

I used to come back from work at six o'clock, I would arrive at home very tired because work at a café does not allow one to sit down. I used to find Pakiso and Ditaba already at home because they used to come back at five o'clock.

Always when I arrived at home I would find Pakiso and others sitting around the fireplace, then my stepmother would send me to the shops. I used to arrive from work when it was already nightfall, therefore I would come back from the shops late at night.)

This is but one incident that illustrates the kind of ill treatment Mohlophehi was subjected to. There are many that demonstrate this appalling situation. However, in the midst of all these, Maphalla demonstrates God's providence. God creates situations that enable Mohlophehi and Disebo to grow to become successful people because of their faith in Him.

Maphalla does not, however, leave this situation to fate but demonstrates the value of human effort as well. Against odds, Mohlophehi and Disebo use the limited resources available to them to realise their dreams. This illustrates that in real life, much as situations may seem to favour other people, that does not determine the fate of the seemingly unfortunate. They can still rise above their limitations through determination. Disadvantaged people can still force their way to success by exploiting available resources and not lamenting their unfortunate circumstances.

Placing the story in context, the message that underlines Maphalla's theme in this novel is that the situation where people are not treated with dignity should and must end. Also the situation where employers and the rich were traditionally white, and employees and the poor traditionally black can be altered and must be altered. This is particularly possible in the era of democracy and Human Rights we live in, in present day South Africa.

6.5.2.3 Mohahlaula wa dithota (Tsotetsi)

Related to Maphalla's novel, is Tsotetsi's novel, *Mohahlaula wa dithota* (1997). The author also portrays the usual situation of African children growing up under destitute circumstances. As it is always the case, they are forced to leave school early to go and work in the cities.

The novel hero, Tsietsi, grows up in a poor township at Tweeling, in the Free State. After completing matric he is forced at a tender age to seek employment in Kroonstad, Welkom, Cape Town and Johannesburg. And most of the time he does unskilled work, as long as he can make a living. Evidently, such situations serve to perpetuate a dependency syndrome and a culture of survival which make Africans to be pre-occupied with immediate needs rather than to work on long term development programmes.

The situation portrayed by Tsotetsi, where the education system produced unskilled African youth, is consistent with Gomomo's (1997:4) observation that:

> Workers in this country entering the labour force are inadequately prepared

> for work. It is without doubt that the deficits in this country are brought about because of the lack of basic education and technical skills. Our workers have inadequate levels of basic educational skills needed to handle new work systems and technologies.

Evidently, this situation makes most Africans to be content with any job as long they can make a living, not because they want to contribute to the development of their country. This situation arises as a result of a system of education that serves as a conveyer-belt to supply capitalist establishments with cheap labour rather than agents of development.

6.5.2.4 Sejamonna ha se mo qete (Maake)

Maake's novel, *Sejamonna ha se mo qete* (1993) is also most touching in portraying the social ills wrought by limited career choices for Africans. The novel demonstrates that because Africans have limited resources and access to opportunities, they can do anything to grab those opportunities even if it means destroying the lives of their own people. The novel hero is a brilliant college student and his roommate, Johny Mbhele who swaps the essay that would earn him a bursary to study at university, conspires against him. Thabiso Mokwena, is also plotted by his roommate to be expelled from college because he is a threat to the girl that he loved.

This phenomenon is also prevalent in other sectors and levels of society where people will push to their desired goal irrespective of whom gets hurt along the way. However, while the scarcity of resources and opportunities could be cited as reasons, there is still moral accountability. In spite of the circumstances people are still morally bound to take full responsibility for the implications of their actions. Therefore placing literary study in context, in such a manner, could contribute in one way or another to healing our brutalised society.

In spite of the setbacks that are suffered by Maake's hero, Thabiso Mokwena, he does not look beyond his immediate community for redress. His community, situated in the remote areas of Lesotho, values his achievements and requests

him to assist in teaching their children at a nearby school. Contrary to the popular saying that Moporofeta ha bokwe ha habo (One's achievements are not always recognised at one's birthplace), Maake demonstrates that the achievement of one Mosotho, no matter how minimal, is the achievement of the whole community. Consequently, he uses his expertise, in the first instance, for the benefit of his immediate community.

In this way Maake attempts to demonstrate that the colonialist and imperialist constructs of world societies can still be undermined. This situation Maake illustrates by giving another reason for the expulsion of Thabiso Mokwena from college where the principal says to him:

> Taba ya ho qetela ke ena, eo ke batlileng ke e lebala. Maoba mona ha baeti ba ne ba le teng, le ile la ya phehisana ka sehlooho se sa kang sa nkgahlisa hohang. Ha ke batlisisa ke ile ka fumana hore ke wena ya ileng a qholotsa sehlooho seo. O a tseba hore taba tsa dipolotiki hase ntho tse dumelletsweng sekolong sena. Teng ha o kgetha sehlooho se kang seo ha ke tsebe hore o ne o kenwe keng, hoba o a tseba hore sekolo sena se tswela pele ke ka thuso ya Manyesemane. Re fumana tjhelete eitseng eo re e fuwang ke mmuso wa Manyesemane. Jwale o nahana hore ba e nke jwang taba ena ha ke dumella dipolotiki tse kang tseo sekolong mona? [...] O tseba hantle jwalo ka ha ke tseba hore re mohaung wa Manyesemane, empa o qala ntho e ka senyetsang Basotho ba bangata dithuto tsa bona, hoba ha Manyesemane a ka kgaotsa ho tshehetsa kholetjhe ena ka ditjhelete re tla tlameha hore re e kwale, hoba ha ho moo re ka fumanang thuso teng (p.82-3).
>
> (Here is the last point that I almost forgot. A short while ago when we had visitors at school, you debated on a topic that I did not like. On investigating I established that it is you who instigated that topic. You know very well that politics is not allowed in this school. Therefore I fail to understand what made you choose that topic, knowing fully well that this school depends on the assistance we get from the English people. We receive a certain

> amount of money from the government of England. Then how do you think they will consider such kind of politics in this school? [...] You know very well as I do that we are at the mercy of the English people, but you instigate something that can ruin the education of many Basotho. The English people can stop subsidising this college and we shall be forced to close it down because there is no where else where we can get assistance.)

This reaction of the principal was prompted by the topic of the debate that focussed on the implications of the Second World War for the Basotho. In that debate Thabiso's team proved that the British were not justified in involving the Basotho in a war that was not theirs. This is again another version of a fat chained dog and a lean free jackal, cited by Guma in *Bitleng la Rasenate*.

Things have not changed much today. There are numerous versions in real life of the situation portrayed by Maake. It is therefore important to be consistently aware, in literary practice, that one of the main strategies of colonialism was to assume control of all the aspects of the lives of the colonised nations. Further that the most effective area of achieving this was in education via the use of colonial languages. Explaining this scenario Magdoff (1982:12) says:

> The imposition of the language and the permeation of the culture and ideology of the dominating power tied all of this together – leading to a social psychology based on the presumed superiority of the colonizers and the inferiority of the colonized.

Related to language imposition, is economic deprivation through the expropriation of the land of the indigenous people and in the process forcing them into a capitalist system. These developments also led to the reduction of livestock that was their means of survival.

> As a result of these societal changes ushered in during the centuries-long wave of capitalist expansion, the rest of the world was brought into the orbit of leading capitalist nations [...] In fact, the changes resulting from decades and centuries of colonialism became so deep-seated that they served to

> perpetuate the essential economic dependency of the peripheral nations on the leading capitalist centres even after the wide-spread post-World-War II decolonization (Magdoff, 1982:13).

This is a view that seems to continue to elude many African intellectuals i.e. the control that capitalist metropolis in the West exercise in the affairs of developing nations. Such control comes under the guises such as international standards, the civilised world and the international community. As a result, the immediate concern of African scholars has focussed on making an impact on the so-called international community rather than developing their immediate community. This is because unconsciously they still believe that the so-called 'international' is superior to the 'national', and this mode of thinking sustains the historical disparities amongst the nations of the world.

Therefore it is no longer helpful to blame the wrongs of colonial education for the under-development of Africa. It is the approach Africans themselves adopt towards education that continues to do the damage on the continent. This damage is inflicted by perpetuating the dependency syndrome of emulating the Westerners without responding to African problems and ways of life. Consequently, although African education may be underrated by 'the other', it can still provide useful clues to the process of nation building provided it is given space in the curricula that affect Africans. As Gomomo (quoted in Kgaphola,1999:2) observes about the South African situation:

> Education is the base from which this country will be able to develop dynamic, internationally competitive workers. We have the will to win in all that if we commit ourselves to. We were able to win the liberation war and we will be able to win the reconstruction and development struggle as well.

The sentiments expressed here demonstrate that the starting point for meaningful development must be the educational needs of the South Africans themselves, before we could concern ourselves with the international community.

Therefore if Africans in general hope to develop Africa, a practice of using our

educational institutions to serve as transit camps for the exportation of our intellectuals to be used for the benefit of the other nationalities must be stopped. The same goes for making education in Africa an extension of Western education. For instance explaining the value of African education for children in African society, Datta (1987:1) says that:

> An individual in such a society is born, grew up, and spent most of his life in his village, which contained a small number of people. Much of his time was spent on the production of food. There was simple division of labour based chiefly on sex and age. Men lived in close relationship with nature (the land, vegetation, and animals) because of limited technological development. They were related to each other by extended ties of kinship that bound them to such unilineal kinship groups as the lineage and clan. These ties supported a network of reciprocal ritual, social, and economic obligations. (p.1-2).

To the simple mind this could mean advocating for a backward system of education. But the fact of the matter is that the majority of Africans still live in rural and semi-rural areas where subsistence farming is still a mode of production. Therefore exposing them to the first world education has no bearing on their life experience. Let alone contributing to their development because models for the development that are in use have been imported from the first world countries and have no relevance to the problems of the third world. Therefore the only reason for imposing and perpetuating Western education is to ensure that Africa is forever enslaved to the Western capitalist metropolis. As Gaoretelelwe (quoted in Kgapola,1999:2) aptly observes:

> Education is a tool for liberation and transformation. Without universal, equal access to education, there cannot be either liberation or transformation. The effort to transform the structures of society and to achieve our vision of non-discriminatory, ultimately participatory democracy would require an immense effort and will fail if we designate the leaders as thinkers and the socially disadvantaged as mere doers.

Consequently, by adapting rather than dismissing in toto, some positive aspects of the African system of education, who knows what useful solutions for our ailing society can be found? Crime, armed robberies and drug trafficking, which are some of the primary concerns in modern day Africa are a direct result of the monopoly of education and capital. This practice therefore makes people to believe that the only way to success is individualism, and not communalism.

Therefore time has come for Africans to realise that not everything Western is good for the development of their society. And most important that one cannot be a liberal capitalist and remain human because capitalism can only survive through the unflinching cold exploitation of fellow human beings. Maake's latest novel, which portrays the rise of students politics, *Kweetsa ya pelo ya motho* (1995), seems to be a realisation and a continuation of the sentiments expressed in this novel.

6.5.2.5 Mehaladitwe ha e eketheha (Mafata)

Mafata's novel, *Mehaladitwe ha e eketheha*, is another valuable contribution to Sesotho literature for the literary period under discussion. He particularly addresses the issue of cultural distortions relating to the so-called developed and under-developed worlds. The contentious question here is whether or not African culture is willy-nilly backward and that the western culture has all the solutions to Africa's problems.

The title of the novel implies the importance of the uniqueness of cultures that is being threatened by misperceptions. In fact contrary to views that postmodernism is de-centring culture, multiculturalism, which is predicted as the fashionable word for the next millenium, is considered to be vital for the re-centring of cultures (cf. Rogers, 1996:1-2). In other words every culture in the world will henceforth be considered important in world affairs. Consequently, 'international' will no longer be considered as the monopoly of the Western world, but as a conglomerate of all the cultures of the world.

Mohaladitwe (daisy) is one of the most beautiful flowers in the Basotho culture.

The fact that these flowers are tossed around implies that they are in the danger of breaking down under the force of the blowing wind. There is also a possibility that they can be entangled with each other and this might affect their natural growth. These tossed daisies are in fact the Basotho culture on the one hand and Western culture on the other.

To illustrate this theme Mafata uses two characters that are brothers, Mofifi and Mafikeng. Mofifi on the one hand adopts a liberal view to the issue of culture by considering aspects that are important for development. This view tends to give a different meaning to the story than the one given earlier. Mehaladitwe could also mean aspects of mutual importance in both the Basotho and Western cultures. Mafikeng on the other hand is out-rightly conservative in out-look. To him the Basotho culture is the only way of life, as it is the case with Westerners.

To illustrate the problem, Mafata creates a situation where the two brothers have to take a decision about the future of their sons, Kgama and Theko. Mofifi feels that the two boys should attend school and herd the cattle after school. Mafikeng is adamant that the school is a waste of time and that the boys should spend the entire time looking after cattle. In his view this will teach the boys the finer tricks of life. There is also a similar problem with regard to initiation. Says Mafata about the proposal Mofifi makes to Mafikeng's objection regarding the future of their two sons:

> Empa le ha thuto e ka ya etsa bana bana ba rona jwalo, re tla be re ba phemisitse mathata a fetang ano. Re tla be re ba qobisitse ditsietsi tseo nna le wena, esita le ba bang ba bangata, re fetileng hara tsona ka lebaka la ho se rutehe. O a tseba le wena hore hoba re qete bophurakgwahla ba rona mme re tshelele merafong ho ile ha ba jwang. Re ile ra koloba ra ba ra fopha! Morethetho wa bophelo ba mona hae o ile wa re lahlehela ho hang, ra iphumana re theolelwa mekoting e tebileng ho feta wa phoofolo efe kapa efe. Ho le jwalo, meokgo ya rona e ne e phetswa ka tjhelete e fokolang haholo, eka ho ne ho sa bonwe hore re phela ditleneng tsa lefu letsatsi le letsatsi (p.1).

(Even though education can affect our children in that way, we shall have saved them from more serious problems. We shall have saved them, including others as well, from the problems that you and I have experienced through lack of education. You know very well what happened to us after completing our initiation and crossed to mines. We were drenched until we dried up! We completely lost the rhythm of life we were used to at home, we found ourselves being thrown into the deepest holes unknown to any animal. In spite of that, our tears were wiped away with very little money, as if nobody was aware of the daily risks we were exposed to.)

Mofifi's concerns are well understood especially in the light of the situation of unskilled labourers in the South African mining industry. He does not wish their children to experience the same hardships they have been exposed to as a result of the lack of education. However, the area he misses is the practice of colour bar and job reservation that were practised in South Africa (cf. Davenport, 1991:503-12), which would still subject their children to other forms of hardships.

Mafikeng on the other hand believes that the only way to ensure a bright, and perhaps a dignified life, would be to bring up their children within the Basotho socio-cultural environment. Instead of preparing them for a capitalist market, which is by nature dehumanising and exploitative, it would be better for their children to learn the craft of making a living among their kith and kin. He seems to have had a hunch that the education spoken about will merely show their children green pastures, which they'll never graze on.

Evidently, unless the two brothers could come to some form of compromise, the family unit is also in danger of disintegrating. Mafata expresses these sentiments clearly in the following passage:

Mafikeng e ne e le senatla, mohale wa marumo, ntlheng ya ho boulela boleng ba Basotho. Makgabanenyana a ntho efe kapa efe o ne a sa a shebe ha feela a ne a ka bona eka ntho eo e tla tlisa phetoho e hlobaetsang bosetjhaba. Mofifi o ne a batlile a mo tela nakong eo a ntseng a leka ho buisana le yena. Ka makgetlo a mangata o ne a ile a utlwa hore a

romele Theko a le mong sekolong, a lebale ka Kgama ha e le moo ntatae a ne a sa utlwisise mabaka. Empa ere ka ha madi a a llelana, ho ne ho sa ka ha eba bonolo ho yena ho etsa jwalo. Bana ba Mafikeng o ne a ba tadima e le ba hae, mme le yena Mafikeng a sheba tswala ya Mofifi jwalo (p.3).

(Mafikeng was strong, a real warrior, when it comes to his passionate jealousy towards the Basotho culture. He was not impressed by anything, no matter how good, as long as it would have a negative effect on his tradition. Mofifi almost gave up hope when they were deliberating on this issue. On many occasions he felt like sending only Theko to school, and to forget about Kgama because his father lacked understanding. But blood is thicker than water and it was therefore not easy for him to implement such a decision. He regarded Mafikeng's children as his own and Mafikeng also considered Mofifi's children as his own.)

Mafikeng is, however, not moved by his younger brother's rational argument. Apart from the possibility of better employment, Mafikeng is actually mostly concerned about the impact Western education would have on their two sons. Hence his elaborate reply to Mofifi's argument:

Ke di tseba hantle dintho tsena tseo o di bolelang, feela ha di atamele le hannyane feela tshenyong e ka tshohang e bile teng ha re ka isa bana bana sekolong. Tabeng ya pele re tla sitwa ho bolotsa bashanyana bana hobane ba tla be ba le matleng a baruti le bahlalefi ba bang kaofela, e leng dihlopha tse kgesang lebollo haholo. Le bona bashanyana bana ba rona ba tla re tsietsa, ba qhomake mona ha re re re bua le bona ka taba eo, re be re tlamehe ho ba memela banna ba tlo ba tlama ka marapo, ba ba ise ka kgang. Kapa ho ka nna ha etsahala hore ba re hlolele ruri. Ha ba se ba re hlotse, re tla iphumana re teile ka maqai a matonana, a morusu. Leqai mokgwa wa lona le a tella, le pelo e kgutshwanyane, le manganga ebile le hloka kutlwelobohloko le mamello. Makgoleng mona o tla fumana ho tletse ona. Ha o re o a botsa, o utlwe hore le leng le lwanne le tahilwe ke majwala a Sekgowa; le leng ke le jeleng ditjhelete tsa setjhaba; le leng le tlilo hlala

basadi – ke thena tse ileng tsa se ke tsa bolotswa, tse sa kang tsa kgojwa dipelo le ho rupelwa malebana le molao wa motheo, wa boholoholo (p.1-2).

(I know of all the things you are telling me about, but they are by far insignificant in comparison with the damage that will be caused by sending our children to school. In the first instance we shall not be able to circumcise our boys because they'll be under the power of the ministers of religion and all the other intellectuals, which are cliques that are overtly negative towards the initiation institution. Our boys will also cause problems for us, they'll be jittery when we discuss this issue, and we shall be forced to summon men to tie them with thongs, and send them away by force. Or it can even happen that we lose complete control over them. After losing control over them we shall find ourselves sitting with the old uninitiated, which are quarrelsome. The uninitiated is typically rude, short-tempered, obdurate and lacks empathy and patience. They will eventually occupy the whole of Makgoleng. When you ask, you'll be told that one of them fought against his wife under the influence of the white man's liquor; the other has embezzled public fund; the other is divorcing his wife. This is typical of the men who were not initiated, whose hearts were not moulded and instructed in the basic traditional laws.)

Mafikeng's concerns are not unfounded considering the ideology that underpinned social practices depicted in the historical period of the novel. The greatest concern is that the ideology, rhythm, tempo and direction of Western education are not in unison with the African situation. It is generally disruptive, to say the least, because it borders on Western arrogance towards whatever is African.

To illustrate the validity of this concern, Mafata introduces another character, Phakwe, who is a teacher at Saint Peter's - a Catholic Church school. Apart from rejecting his Sesotho name and calling himself Paolosi – a so-called Christian name, Phakwe is out-rightly negative towards Basotho cultural practices. Says Mafata about Phakwe:

Lebitso la hae la tswalo e ne e le Phakwe, mme a se a sa batle ho utlwa

motho a mmitsa ka lona, a re le a mo rona, ke la dipoding; ba mmitse ka la tlhatsuo, la Paul. Empa medumo ya lona e sa dumellaneng le mokgwa wa oo Basotho ba buang ka wona, ya tlama batho ho le lokisa ka ho re Paolosi. Le teng a re oa shata, empa ba itswella pele feela ho mmitsa ka tsela eo, haholo hobane e ne e le bona ba mo bitsang ka lona, ba sa lebella hore a ipitse. Ba re le sebediswa ke bona, le ha le rehilwe yena jwalo (p.49).

(His birth name was Phakwe, and he no longer wanted to be called by it, saying it embarrasses him, it belongs to the goats, that he should be called by his cleansing name, Paul. But its phonology did not conform to the Sesotho rules of articulation, and it compelled people to correct it and call him Paolosi. Even then he objected, but people continued calling him like that, mostly because they used the name and did not expect him to name himself. They claimed that it was a name used by them, even though it has been given to him.)

One understands in this passage that among the Basotho one's name is a community rather than an individual property. Also that the name given to a Mosotho must conform to the Sesotho language structural rules. Furthermore Mafata emphasises that the Basotho prefer the name, Phakwe because it has meaning to them:

Ba ne ba utlwa le ba hopotsa maloti a habo bona, le tletse menyepetsi ya bohlabani le boiphihlelo ba bahale, le fupere dipale tsa naha ya habo bona. Ba ne ba bile ba mo qapetse theneketso e monate ka lona, ba mo etseditse thoko e mo nehang seriti sa dithahadima hara bahlankana ba bang (p.49).

(It reminded them of the mountain ranges of their country, it contained tears of the warriors and the achievements of the bold, it contained the stories of their country. They had even composed lyrics of praise around this name, a praise poem that gave him the dignity among outstanding young men.)

This argument also illustrates that among the Basotho, Phakwe's achievements as a teacher are not considered as an individual thing. It means the achievement of the entire Basotho nation. Therefore changing his name in order to be accepted to the so-called civilised structures means disowning his own people as well. Says Mafata about Phakwe or Paolosi:

> Mokgwa ona wa ho tadima dintho o ne o le mading ho Paolosi. Eng kapa eng e nang le Bosotho ka hara yona o ne a e nena, a bona e nyediseha. E ne e se feela a leng jwalo: o ne a rupetswe mehleng ya puso ya Manyesemane, nakong eo ho neng ho engwe ka maoto ke banna ba makorwana a tlohang hodima phatla a ilo dikela ka sekotlong, ho rutwa batho hore ba furalle metheo ya setho sa bona, ba latele mekgwa ya mose ho mawatle, ba tle ba itebale, ba dumele ho sebediswa ho betla kgoia e shebisitswe Engelane; eseng ba ikutlwisise, ba tle ba tsebe le ho naha ya habo bona (p.49).
>
> (This way of looking at things was in Paul's blood. He despised anything related to Sesotho culture, seeing it as despicable. His attitude was not surprising: he was educated at the time of British rule. The time when the men who were bald from the middle of their heads to the back were standing on their feet, teaching people to reject their cultural foundation to follow overseas cultures. This would make them to forget whom they are, agree to be used for the benefit of England; not to understand themselves so that they do not even think about working for their own country.)

These are the effects of colonialism that have made people to look down upon the things that made them in pursuit for the apparent privileges that would never make them part of the culture they are aspiring for. The fact of the matter is that Africans will remain part of the broad African culture and not part of the Western/British culture no matter what they do to become assimilated into the latter culture.

Afterall Africans are born African, and can therefore do nothing to become a significant component of the Western/British culture. Denouncing their African culture will not make them Western/British no matter how hard they try.

Unfortunately this is the reality most Africans have never come to realise. Using Paolosi's address to students to portray this scenario of denouncing African culture, Mafata says:

> Le leng la mabaka ao le tlisitsweng sekolong mona ka ona ke hore le fumantshwe lesedi le letjha, le tlang ho le lopolla ditumelong tsa mafifi, tse aparetseng setjhaba sena sa rona. Ha le ntse le ya le ruteha, mme le qalella ho utlwisisa dintho hantle, le lona le tla bona ka moo setjhaba sa rona se sa leng morao ka teng; ka moo se sa ntseng se kgomaretse ditlwaelo le meetlo e se nang molemo ka teng, mme ho hlokahalang hore se fetohe. Mose ho mawatle kwana, dinaheng tse tswetseng pele, batho ba teng ba phela bophelo bo monate ho feta ba rona hobane ha ba a qenehela dintho tse se nang thuso jwalo ka rona (p.49).
>
> (One of the reasons of bringing you to school is to give you new light, which will free you from the beliefs of darkness, which are typical of our nation. As you continue learning, and beginning to understand things properly, you will also realise how backward our nation is; in the manner in which it is still clinging to traditions and cultures that are of no importance, hence in need of change. Overseas, in civilised countries, people lead an enjoyable life more than we do because they are not clinging to things of unimportance like us.)

This remark perpetuates a contentious view that there is neither development nor civilisation apart from the ones that are approximate to the Western value systems. For a Mosotho to be considered civilised, he or she must emulate Western values entirely. For an African country to develop and to be considered developed, it must practice the capitalist mode of production that is dictated by individual interests rather than communal interests.

Consequently, the notion of *ubuntu*, which has been accepted as a mechanism for nation building in South Africa will remain a fluke as long as such views persist. After all *ubuntu* or its Sesotho equivalent, *motho ke motho ka batho* were born out of circumstances different from the Western practices. However, opportunistic

Western capitalists have already begun to use this humane notion as a business venture to promote capilist interests. For instance, in Vereeniging there is what is called *Ubuntu Cash Loans*, one of the many money lending systems that operate at exorbitant interest rates for self-enrichment at the expense of the naive economically disadvantaged persons.

The expression of *ubuntu* has been raised several times whenever South Africans deliberated on serious social problems such as crime, human abuse and social reconstruction. However, the context in which such an expression was born, never formed a significant part of the debate. More often than not, in the SABC 1 television programmes such as Felicia's *Felicia Mabuza Suttle* and Molebatsi's *Two Way*,[5] only the elite – who have lost touch with their cultural roots, and foreigners, have featured on these programmes. The only person who has come closest to capturing this notion is Professor Themba Sono, who featured in one of such programmes, and stated unequivocally that the notion of *ubuntu* cannot be understood outside its rural setting.

To say the least, the programmes merely demonstrate how participants are out of touch with the etymology of the expressions, *ubuntu*, an abridged form of *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, or the Sesotho equivalent, *motho ke motho ka batho*. On a serious note the shows demonstrate how noble ideals of a people can be hijacked and distorted for self-image because the real custodians of these concepts have always been left out. There is in fact no way in which an individual who does not live and experience African culture can make informed statements on a culture remote and foreign to him or her. It is only within the African culture that the essence of these expressions can be captured. Consequently, their displacement can only tamper with their meaning. Therefore what Mafata illustrates about Paolosi is typical of this unfortunate situation.

Unfortunately many African elite and intellectuals still believe that being

---

[5] These are weekly talk show programmes that are screened on SABC 1 TV on Monday and Thursday nights, respectively.

`international' or `civilised' means to emulate and to uphold Western value systems. The fact of the matter is that the international community still eagerly waits for genuine out-put from Africa to consolidate multi-nationalism. The international community expects something of African origin that could contribute to the wealth of the cultures of the world. In spite of this truism, the African intelligentsia seems not very keen, to this date, to contribute anything African to the international community. They are mostly pre-occupied with emulating Western values and contributing to the cultures and languages of other nations minus their own, without realising the implications of such practices.

This is not surprising because to most informed Africans, international still seems to be akin to making contributions firstly to the Western world rather than to the life situations that directly affect them. This practice in return shuts away the majority of Africans from gaining experience into the affairs of the world as role players and recipients only. Consequently, most African communities still remain ignorant about their position and place in world affairs and the nature of power relations in particular. It is only when language in literature is seen as a social product and social practice that the African intelligentsia could come to terms with the fact that:

> There is no reason to believe that `literary' texts are exempted from these correlations, nor from the stronger, casual, explanations that have been offered for such correlations. There is a dialectical interrelationship between language and social structure: the varieties of language usage are both products of socioeconomic forces and institutions – reflexes of such factors as power relations, occupational roles, social stratification, etc. – and practices which are instrumental in forming and legitimating these same social forces and institutions (cf. Fowler, 1981:21).

There can therefore be one of the following reasons why language in African literary study remains an unresolved issue. It is firstly that the use of colonial languages will continue to confer the colonial mentality on Africans so that they never consider themselves as equal partners in world affairs. Secondly, colonial languages are used to sustain critical methods that divorce literary practice from

social practice so that Africans do not even understand their peculiar circumstances.

Undoubtedly this is a serious setback to a continent that was at the centre of the cradle of the civilisations of the world. For instance when it comes to mathematics,

> The ancient Egyptians, Sumerians, and Chinese were all using a form of abacus to carry out these calculations for thousands of years before the Christian era (Webster's Encyclopedia, 1991:1663).

And when it comes to writing the following information still confirms the above assertion relating to civilisation by pointing to the use of papyrus reeds, for writing in ancient Egypt. This papyrus is described as:

> An acquatic reedlike plant, Cyperus papyrus, up to 10 ft (3 m) tall, originally cultivated in the Nile delta of Egypt and now growing wild in parts of Africa and in Syria. It was used by the ancient Egyptians to make paper: the thick triangular stems were split into thin stripes, which were pressed together while still wet. It was also used for rope, mats, sails and shoes, and the pith was a common food (ibid. p.1957).

There is also information about medicine that enabled the Egyptians to preserve the Pharaohs in the pyramids – one of the seven wanders of the world. It is as a result of this overwhelming evidence of Africa's achievements in world civilisation that Mafata laments in the passages referred to above.

Mafata in those passages confirms concerns that have always been raised regarding the nature of education in South Africa and Africa as a whole. It is an education that alienates the educated from the uneducated. It makes the educated Africans to admire and to espouse Western values. Yet this education does not make them an integral part of the elite in Western societies. Instead, they mostly end up as an extension of the labour force of Western countries. This multi-national social construct has the following implications:

> The labour needs of foreign capital in several African countries usually

> operate at three interdependent levels. These include: (a) the level of workers qualified for unskilled or semi-technical jobs in light manufacturing and assembly plants; (b) the level of technical maintenance and other 'support' services for foreign and other businesses, hotels and so forth; and (c) the level of middle management, mainly for corporations investing in Africa (Mazrui, 1997:44).

Thus the language of instruction, including related practices in education, has some bearing on the creation and reproduction of this labour hierarchy. Hence exclaims Mazrui:

> Expectedly, European languages will continue to be the medium of instruction in these institutions, and the development of technical and vocational Euro-linguistic skills will be an essential part of this labour policy (op. cit.).

As a result of this labour configuration, which is not so self-evident to many aspiring Africans, we end up with a situation where

> The children of upper-class families whose familiarity with the European languages is much greater, on the one hand, may be expected to end up in universities and, eventually, managerial positions. Thus a system of educational instruction is put in place in which those who are expected to succeed, and those who are expected to fail and drop out, is closely class-bound; can be seen indeed, as part of a wider capitalist design (op. cit.).

Alamin Mazrui is however aware, as do most progressive African intellectuals, that it is not going to be an easy task to change this world-configuration. Past and present efforts have been based on reaction and counter-discourse on the terms of discourses that have been established by the 'other'. He therefore proposes the following as one of the possibilities that could be explored:

> The African quest for intellectual independence must be based on independent terms of reference that can guide the continent towards a more organic path. Under the present power relations, the English

> language is not likely to allow Africans the politico-economic space for this kind of intellectual independence. African languages may fare better, for the very act of re-centring them sets in motion new dynamics that may provide some room for intellectual manoeuvre, at least in the short run. But the struggle to re-centre these languages naturally demands our engagement in a wider struggle – against imperialism, and against organisations like the World Bank and IMF and what they represent – to create a new world order (ibid. p.47).

Such an observation makes it imperative for literary scholars not to contend with the clichés of literary themes such as the *clash of cultures, makgoweng motif, protest*, etc. There are far deeper implications other than these superficial labels that have become characteristic of African literature in general and the Sesotho novel in particular.

6.5.2.6 Moprofesara Ranko (Bodibe)

The superficial approach to African literary study alluded to above can partly be attributed to the tendency of portraying Africans in terms of other nationalities, especially Europeans. It is Bodibe, among few others, who breaks this tendency by concentrating exclusively on the life of the Basotho, whom are Africans anyway. In his novel, *Moprofesara Ranko*, he demonstrates that Africans cannot forever be relegated to the status of paupers, drawers of water and hewers of wood. They can still achieve the highest professional levels. This he also does in his earlier novel, *Bofelekwane, botho kapa bofokodi* (1985), where he portrays the lives of great Basotho achievers in medical sciences.

In the case of *Moprofesara Ranko*, where he portrays the achievements of the African academics, he also demonstrates how colonialism has distorted their judgement. Being schooled in an oppressive system of education, such African achievers often tend to continue the legacy of their colonial masters by reproducing an oppressive educational environment. This trend is clearly demonstrated by Paulo Freire in his publication, *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (1963:97-98), where he claims that:

> It is absolutely essential that the oppressed participate in the revolutionary process with an increasingly critical awareness of their role as Subjects of transformation. If they are drawn into the process as ambiguous beings, partly themselves and partly the oppressed housed within them – and if they come to power still embodying that ambiguity imposed on them by the situation of oppression – it is my contention that they will merely imagine they have reached power. Their existential duality may even facilitate the rise of a sectarian climate leading to the installation of bureaucracies which undermine the revolution [...] They may aspire to revolution as a means of domination, rather than as a road to liberation.

According to Paulo Freire this happens because the oppressed admire their oppressors to a point where they equate liberation with the oppression of others. In other words, when the oppressed become liberated, they in turn become oppressors. Bodibe clearly illustrates this tendency by portraying the life of a high Mosotho achiever, *Moprofesara Ranko*.

Instead of developing his people, Ranko ill-treats and frustrates them. He destroys the many lives of young women who fall in love with him, mainly because they merely admire his achievements. He also does not take kindly at arguments made by perceptive students whose views are different from those he holds. He punishes them by failing them and some become dropouts while others are forced to continue their education elsewhere.

Ranko's conduct antagonises him with the students and the community at large. His behaviour is clearly described in the memorandum that is sent by the Students Representative Council (SRC) to the university council opposing his appointment as the next rector of the university of Moqheme. Ranko has previously served as professor of history and is holding the position of Dean of the Faculty when this scenario unfolds. Says the SRC memorandum:

> Profesa Ranko ha a na kamano e ntle le baithuti. A mangata mahlatsipa a lonya la hae a sa qetang dithuto ka baka la hae. [...] Ba bangata ba wele mme ba wela ruri – ya eba hona ha ba putlame ka dimpa fatshe.

Ho feta moo, rekoto ya moprofesara Ranko le leloko la Eva e nkga jwalo ka sebodu. [...] O a tseba yena seo a se entseng maphelong a bona. Ha se bona feela. Baithuti ba bangata ba sesadi ba fetileng mona Moqheme, ba etsa Histori, ha ba je ditheohelang ha ba hopola Ranko (p.46).

(Professor Ranko does have a good relationship with students. There are many victims of his vanity, who as a result could not complete their studies. [...] Most of them have fallen by the wayside and have fallen forever – it was they started lying flat on their stomachs.

Apart from that Professor Ranko has a stinking record in relation to Eve's gender. [...] He knows fully well what he has done to their lives. It is not only this group. Most former students at Moqheme, who studied history, are always gripped by fear whenever they recall Ranko.)

In this novel Bodibe sounds a warning to big headed intellectuals that *motho ke motho ka batho*. When one achieves in life he or she must not look down upon others or abuse power to control and determine their lives. On the other hand it is a good illustration that pride comes before a fall. Ranko is finally prosecuted for his deeds but the severity of the penalty is reduced by mitigating factors as Ranko is still a one-eyed man in the land of the blind in relation to his own community.

6.5.2.7 Nketjwana o shweletse mohloding (Thakhisi)

The last novel we shall consider is S.P. Thakhisi's *Nketjwane o shweletse mohloding*. Although the novel was published in 1991, it focusses on the spirit of reconciliation and nation building, which have become some of the top priorities in modern day South Africa. The setting of the novel is the Lesotho-Free State border, the areas around the Drakensberg mountain range in the eastern Free State. This setting does not only illustrate the division between South Africa and Lesotho. It also typifies the previously overt racial divisions between blacks and whites in South Africa.

The story commences with some kind of deviant behaviour. On the one hand, a number of sheep belonging to chief Mokoena of Metjhetjhaneng breaks away from

the flock and gets lost in the mountains. On the other hand, two Afrikaner boys break away from the Bethlehem High School students who are on tour around Mount Aux Sources[6]. They also get lost in the heavy mist and it is impossible to locate them.

As chief Mokoena and his companions proceed with the search for the lost sheep, they stumble upon these two boys huddled against a rock. After establishing their identities and the problem they are facing, chief Mokoena and his companions give the two boys whatever help is available. In the process a message has been sent to Bethlehem to acquire the services of a rescue helicopter. The mission of the rescue team is initially hampered by heavy fog but as the mist clears up chief Mooena and the stranded boys see a rescue helicopter which is searching for them.

The boys are flown home and later on Mokoena also finds his lost sheep. As a gesture of gratitude one of the boys' father who is a farmer at Clarens, sends Mokoena a ram that will improve the breed of his flock of sheep. Then sets in an era of friendship and collaboration in development of the two separate communities represented by the farmer and Mokoena. Their children also continue this relationship of neighbourliness later in life.

The title of the novel *Nketjwana o shweletse mohloding*[7] actually means that clinging to old habits can be disastrous to a people who blindly follow selfish leaders who lack vision. Such people seldom benefit anything from their blind loyalty to the peril of all. This is clearly summarised in the following extract:

> Metsi a phodileng, a nyorollang, a kgathollang, a matlafatsang, a kollang sedibeng sa boithero, sa boitaolo, sa boipuso; sediba se fatilweng ke setjhaba, se a kwaletswe. Se a nyoretswe empa ha se a fumane. Metsi ao a kgaoditse ho kopotsa, ho phorosela le ho phalla, hobane ka Sesotho se

---

[6] Mount Aux Sources is the highest peak on the Drakensberg mountain range, situated on the border between the Free State and KwaZulu Natal.

[7] Cf. Selepe's (1997:139-42) amplified exposition of this novel.

kgaoletsang – NKETJWANE O SHWELETSE MOHLODING (p.83).

(The water that is cool, that quenches thirst, that recreates, that regenerates, that flows from the fountain of collective planning, freedom, self-rule; the fountain that was dug by the nation is closed for it. That water has ceased to flow, to meander and swell, because in brief Sesotho – THE FROG HAS DIED AT THE SOURCE.)

This proverb comes from the observation of the Basotho that if a frog dies at the source of the spring, it contaminates the water and people can no longer use it until the dead frog is removed. It is as if the fountain has dried up because its water can no longer be used. Likewise if certain social practices are harmful to good living, they should be removed so that society could live a healthy life. It cannot be over-emphasised that if this novel is considered in its proper context, it can go a long way in moving the whole South African community in the desired direction of reconciliation and nation building.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter has found that the historical events between the sixties and the nineties have contributed to certain ideological and perceptual shifts in the Sesotho novel. Such ideological and perceptual shifts have also affected both creative writing and literary study in various ways. Some effects have been explicit while others have been implicit, and it this trend which underlines the main argument of this chapter.

The important dimension of the argument in this chapter is that there is not necessarily a one-to-one correspondence between literature and society. There is, instead, a dialectical relationship between the two. This has been discerned from the manner in which both authors and critics have responded to prevailing social conditions during this era of resistance, freedom and the awaited reconciliation.

Finally, the chapter has found that it is by interrogating language use in literary practice, that literary study can act as a catalyst for social development and nation

building, not only for South Africa but for the rest of Africa as well. Most importantly the chapter has found that ideology alone or utopia alone cannot provide effective mechanisms for addressing the problems surrounding literary study and social development. It is only by marrying the two concepts that meaningful progress could be made in the area of social development, wherein language and literature will play a catalytic role.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

The study of the novel is not a new phenomenon in African literature in general, and Sesotho literature in particular. However, like any scientific endeavour a need for the study of the Sesotho novel will rise and re-arise from time to time. Therefore this study should not be interpreted as merely a progression in the study of the Sesotho novel. Instead, it should be interpreted as a new beginning, an intervention so to say, in a particular moment of Sesotho literary history. Consequently, a different emphasis on the findings has served as a basis of the context in which this study has been conducted and the contribution it hoped to make.

7.2 The summary of findings

This study has found that the emergence and the development of the Sesotho novel cannot be attributed to the simplistic notion of influence by the European novel. While it acknowledges generic factors as a possibility, it also argued that traditional literature and local factors have also played a role in the development of the Sesotho novel.

Further than this, the study showed that different historic periods and the community's level of development have a bearing on literary practice. This is discerned in the themes that are portrayed and how they are portrayed. The three historical periods that have been studied demonstrated different levels of consciousness, from the naïve to the subdued, up to the realist level. Further that it is in the last stage that the scope of themes widened to address various pertinent issues.

These thematic and perceptual shifts are attributable to what Ngara (1985) terms the Dominant Ideology of an Epoch, where he argues that:

> We will take ideology as referring to the dominant ideas of an epoch or class, with regard to politics and law, morality, religion, art and science (p.20).

This being the case, we noted that Sesotho novels written between 1900 and 1930 exhibit a state of bewilderment and confusion under the brutality of colonialism, where literary practitioners were pre-occupied with religious, cultural and educational themes. In the process they were denigrating what is theirs and glorifying what they have acquired or were about to acquire viz. Western value systems, which had become new mirrors in which to look at themselves.

Then, the period between 1930 and 1960 demonstrates a subdued state of consciousness under stringent and almost dehumanising laws that controlled the lives of the authors and literary output. This was the era of the rise of apartheid, the migrant labour system, industrialisation as well as urbanisation. To most Basotho South African urban areas were not their home nor was education a passport to an instant better life. These experiences are reflected in the works of the period.

The period from the 1960s to the 1990 ushered in era of massive oppression, nostalgia, rebellion, nationalism, self-identity, liberation and reconciliation. Some authors portrayed their plight under apartheid while others recreated their traditional past. Others voiced discontent and damage wrought by colonialism and apartheid, while other attempted to portray their own self-image. There are also some that saw reconciliation as the best option towards the building of a new South(ern) Africa and portrayed the process.

In concluding this study two important issues seem to have been covered. The one issue relates to the development of the Sesotho novel in terms of its emergence, creative and critical output as well as the pedagogical practice. The other issue focuses on literature and literary study not only as creative and academic practice. It also considers literary practice as linked to both language and social development. The latter point therefore advocates for a radical change of both perception and emphasis in the study of the Sesotho novel. This change is

considered radical because it is penetrative, and goes deep to the root of the problem. The real problem has been identified in this study as the ongoing West-Africa conflict – which was also manifest in South Africa through *Apartheid*. The implications of these problems for African literary study are revisited in this concluding chapter with special reference to the period between the 1960s and the 1990s.

7.3 A review of literature related factors from the 1960s - 1990s

The era between 1960s-1990s is the most decisive in South Africa history and it is characterised by two most important historical events, which have a bearing on literary study. The one is the fierce political and ideological struggles that were aimed at either maintaining racial oppression or at introducing a democratic era in South Africa. Perceptions are that if there has been no timely intervention, the ferocity of that struggle could have reduced the country to ashes. The other is the era of reconciliation and reconstruction, which has given South Africa hope for a better future. This hope cannot be limited to political processes only, but can principally be attributed to the role played by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission by unearthing information about some of the atrocities committed in the past. Such atrocities as it has been established, were committed in an effort either to perpetuate injustice or to bring about a just social order.

People from most structures of society, who in the past played various roles that either had direct or indirect impact on the lives of many South Africans, appeared before this commission to acknowledge their wrongs, complicity and/or omissions. Some were perpetrators while others were victims of such atrocities. These individuals and/or their respective socio-political formations went through a painful exercise of informing the nation about their deeds, with the sole aim of healing the wounds and bringing all South Africans together as a one united nation.

However, conspicuous by their absence, has been the South African academic community. This scenario then raises a question whether in academia there have been no omissions or wrongs committed, nor complicity with the previous regime.

Further that if the implications of such oversights or acts were addressed, couldn't they have also contributed to making South Africa a country everyone is yearning for[1].

While it remains unacknowledged, the negative impact that the traditional academic practice has brought to bear on the lives of many South Africans, especially the formerly marginal groups, is demonstrated in wide reforms that the White Paper on Higher Education has introduced to address the apartheid legacy. Robin Richards, Edwin Naidu, Karen MacGrecor and Sarah Frost are but some of those who followed these developments with interest (cf. *New Nation, April 25, 1997 p.25-26*).

To demonstrate that there was indeed, in fact there still is, something awfully wrong with higher education in South Africa, Annette Lansink argues that the curriculum used in higher education is one of the main culprits in the records of the violation of human rights. She argues that:

> In South Africa curricula were used as most effective weapons in reproducing the colonial apartheid system by shaping the mindset of the population in sustaining this system (1997:8).

Such curricula were doubtlessly used, and are still being used, by a significant section of the South African academic community. In crystallising the overarching effect of such curricula Lansink cites William Makgoba, who says:

> [In South Africa] what is common between a judge, a doctor, a politician, a policeman, a priest, a journalist, or an editor and the ordinary citizen is the type of education they received or the curriculum that provided the foundations of their education (op. cit.)

It is for these and other related reasons that Makgoba, and other concerned academicians, have urged the Committee of University Principals, the Committee

---

[1] A specific example relating to this concern will be illustrated later in this chapter

of Technikon Principals and Universities, including academicians involved in these institutions

> [...] to make submissions to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and give account of how curricula had reinforced institutionalised racial discrimination and contributed to gross human rights violations against the oppressed. Universities have to acknowledge that curricula had been a mechanism of maintaining dominant beliefs, values and oppressive practices as a necessary step to purge the educational system of the legacy of apartheid. Since curricula are produced within social, cultural and historical conditions, it is time for whites to accept that white privilege has been reproduced repeatedly in curricula (op. cit.).

One of the most glaring areas in which the South African academic community has wronged the majority of South Africans is language – a sub-structure of culture. Language rights have been violated and continue to be violated even in the new political dispensation. For instance, the question of medium of instruction, especially in teaching and research in African languages, remains an unresolved issue and many still do not see it as a problem[2].

If this concern may be conceived, and even be dismissed, as an issue that has no bearing on language and literary studies at tertiary level, then a declaration ought to be made that such language policy was not designed by the apartheid state. The South African academic community must also state openly that it has never been part of this country's history. In doing so the academic community will be acknowledging that in its professional practice, it has never affected anyone nor was it affected by the South Africa of the past. In other words, it should also not be expected to make any positive contribution in the unfolding process in South Africa. Such academics should make it known that they are not involved in the unfolding social process in this country. In fact, they must admit that they are neither aware nor interested in the fact that:

---

[2] V

> The country is in the process of constructing a national multi-cultural, non-racial and non-sexist identity. [That] in doing so the voices of previously silenced groups have to be given preference. In other words, to create a new South African identity it is necessary to accept the dominance of the African experience in the new identity. At the same time the previously distorted or erased experiences and perceptions of other groups, marginalised on the basis of gender, class and sexual orientation, have to be recognised and accepted (Lansink, 1997:8).

If this is not the way in which traditional academics perceive their new role, if ever they have had any, in South Africa, then it is logical to make an assumption. There are two distinct groups of academics in South Africa. The one group is in one way or another part and parcel of developments in this country, and therefore espouses a utopian outlook. The other group of the South African academic community has never been part of developments in this country, and will continue as an entity that will neither affect or be affected by events in South Africa, as of present nor in the future. In spite of disowning its negative role, this is a group that is trapped in ideology to maintain the status quo in the name of 'academic standards' and the 'autonomy' of tertiary institutions.

However, regardless of perceptions that may be held around the role of the academia, the contention of this study is that the academic community has been part of the old South Africa, and so will it be part of a new one. Consequently, its role is considered relevant to this study, particularly on the question of language in African literature, for "without doubt, reflection on the transformation of education is fundamental to building the country and strengthening our democracy" (Lansink, 1997:8).

7.3.1 Some factors that affected language practice in South Africa

Language practice, as a social commodity and a social discourse, is linked to other social processes in South Africa. In fact it is at discourse level that the character of a society is reflected. Consequently it can be argued that a number of factors have affected both the development of African languages and the study of

African literature in general, and the study of the Sesotho language and the novel in particular. However, language, as one of such basic factors has been on the periphery of discussions relating to issues of literary development. Language, as will be illustrated later, has affected both the teaching and research in African literature negatively, hence the under-development of the African people. Alluding to the importance of language as not only one of the most significant factors in African literature, but also a fundamental one, Ngugi (1986:4) says:

> The language of African literature cannot be discussed meaningfully outside the context of those social forces, **which have made it both an issue demanding our attention and a problem calling for a resolution.** On the one hand it is imperialism in its colonial and neo-colonial phases continuously press-gagging the African hand to the plough to turn the soil over, and putting blinkers on him to make him view the path ahead only as determined for him by the master armed with the bible and the sword. In other words, imperialism continues to control the economy, politics, and cultures of Africa (emphasis added).

Ngugi further contends that "language has always been at the heart of the two contending social forces in the Africa of the twentieth century" (op cit.). These forces are the former European colonial powers and Africa, irrespective of whatever labels are attached to their post-colonial status. The significant impact of this development is that it has resulted into a situation where most African countries, even after independence, "came to be defined and defined themselves in terms of the languages of Europe" (ibid. p.5). Unfortunately this situation persists to date, giving people of European descent an unfair language advantage over the African people. African languages remain colonised as Africa was colonised, and European thinking and languages continue their dominance in African literary practice. Eurocentrism and Afrocentrism are therefore still engaged in a contest for the ownership of African literary practice, which contest turns out to uphold European hegemony.

Expressing similar views on the contest alluded to above, Mazrui (1997:35)

stretches the argument further by giving it another dimension, namely the role of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the World Bank (and of course, the International Monetary Fund). He says:

> There is a contest going on in African education between English, primarily, as a medium of instruction, and the indigenous languages. It is a contest in which the World Bank is playing a role ostensibly at odds with its expressed position. The process of colonial education had the general effect of marginalising most African languages in favour of Euro-languages, creating an imperialist linguistic configuration that came to legitimise and reproduce the unequal division of power and resources between the speakers of Euro-languages and speakers of African languages.

This chapter is, however, not primarily concerned with finer issues around the patronising European practices of assimilation on the basis of the monopoly of knowledge and language, which is still dividing the elite from the peasants in Africa. Neither is it primarily concerned with views expressed in resultant African publications about the standard, character and modes of description ascribed to African literature in general, and the Sesotho novel, in particular. A comprehensive consideration and implications of such publications would warrant a completely different study, devoted to this subject *per se.*

What is considered important here is to explore perceptual and ideological shifts between the sixties and the nineties, as well as the effect of language practice in African languages on social development. This will be done by firstly gleaning valuable information relating to efforts made towards the development of African literature, and the attendant creative, pedagogical and research practices. Secondly, attention will be given to the exploration of the effect and possible perceptions and misperceptions – signifiers of ideology, which 'masked' contentious issues relating to the state of the production and the study of the Sesotho novel during this era. Thirdly, an attempt will be made to establish possible measures – signifiers of utopia, which can be employed to alleviate the situation that has contributed, especially at tertiary level, to peculiar trends in the

study of the Sesotho novel in particular and African literary scholarship in general.

7.3.2 A profile of African literary developments in the 1960s - 1990s

The literary history covered in both the production and the study of the Sesotho novel since the turn of the 20th century may be assumed to be an era characterised by significant literary development in African literature in general. Such an assumption can be attributed to the development of the Sesotho novel into a unique tradition and a definable genre by the sixties and beyond. Furthermore, this genre can be assumed to have also grown in stature, considering the classical works, which were produced by its pioneers such as Mofolo, Segoete, Khaketla and others.

Comments and reviews on both serialised and completed works during the early period of Sesotho literature have been widely covered in the Lesotho magazine, *Leselinyana*. Swanepoel's research on these early developments in Sesotho literary history will be used as a frame of reference in addressing the problem at hand. He regards *Leselinyana* as one of the potent mechanisms that have been instrumental in literary developments in the Sesotho language, in Lesotho.

One is therefore tempted to assume that South African magazines such as the now defunct *Wamba* and *Tswelopele*, could have played a similar role were it not of the language politics of South Africa. For instance authors such as M.E. Mosese published some of his poems in *Wamba* (cf. Ngcangca, 1989:127). C.L.J. Mophethe also published a number of poems in *Tswelopele*. Radio stations that broadcast in African languages also contributed through radio dramas whereby some were adapted from novels e.g. *Mopheme*, by S. Matlosa. This demonstrates how African literature in this part of the continent could have progressed by leaps and bounds if these facilities were used equitably.

Another journal that was published by the Department of Bantu Education, the *Bantu Education Journal*, later called *Educamus*, could also have advanced the development of African languages and literatures. However, such possible progress was made impossible by the editorial policies that allowed articles to be

published only in Afrikaans and English, although intended for the African readership. This magazine was further confined to the school market, where critiques and lectures were confined to prescribed works only, thus effectively excluding general readership.

The first serious effort in general literary study in South Africa was inspired by the visit of Professor Albert Gerard to the South African Universities on 26 June to 12 August 1981[3]. Some of the results of this visit were the formation of the African Languages Association of Southern African with its journal, the *Southern African Journal of African Languages* (SAJAL). Before this development the Department of Africa Languages at UNISA had started a departmental journal called as far back as 1972 LIMI. LIMI also functioned at Pretoria University as the journal for `Studies in Bantoetale"[4]. This journal was published under the language policies of the time, which ignored the use of African languages – the target languages of the bulk of the clientele in African languages departments.

As in the case of LIMI, the SAJAL publication never considered the language of the target audience as a crucial issue. The language policies of the Nationalist Party regime actually determined the editorial policy of this journal. Hence the medium through which contributions to this journal could be published became either Afrikaans or English.

This has been a characteristic feature of scientific journals in the study of African languages. Such associations include the African Languages Association of Southern Africa (ALASA), and the South African Society of Folklore Studies (SAFOS). Even after the adoption of a democratic constitution, which entrenched language rights, these associations have been reluctant to publish articles in African languages. It is only recently that the editorial boards of these associations are beginning to consider the use of an African language for the publication of articles.

---

[3] Swanepoel (1993:5-9) adequately covers details of this visit in the preface of the 1993 revised version of Gerard's book.

[4] Indebted to Prof. CF Swanepoel for information about this historical development.

The language issue and the structure of such associations which was raised by Crawhall's and Mankomo's (1991:13) review of the Sixth ALASA International Conference seem also to have gone unnoticed[5]. Their article argues that the problem, as they perceive it, is that:

> ALASA's bureaucratic and conservative structures do not provide much scope for debate and disagreement and even less for conflict management. Although we are assured repeatedly that anyone can join ALASA, the reality is that more radical language workers have avoided the organisation.

From the observation of the authors of this article, the letter which was sent by the ALASA executive to the Department of Education and Training (DET) expressing concern about the abysmal state of the 1990 matriculation results can thus be viewed as hypocritical in terms of the above statement. It is inconceivable of any language practitioner to be naïve to the fact that language is a fundamental factor which can either accelerate or retard the learning process. Consequently it turns out to be a determining factor for either success or failure in education. In fact, since the April 1994 elections, and the creation of one Ministry of Education, it has been demonstrated that the best achievers in the matriculation examinations are always candidates who are either English or Afrikaans speaking, who learn and are taught in their respective home languages.

The authors of this review ascribe the source of the problem with ALASA to the association's avoidance of critical language issues. This is done by glossing over ideological differences within the association, over and above academic and financial exclusion for membership and/or the attendance of conferences. For instance, one of the requirements for full membership of the association was an Honours degree in an African language, until 1995. Such a stipulation does not only deprive other African language practitioners a right to participate in issues that affect their languages. It also effectively excludes those who cannot master

---

[5] The only visible attempt towards addressing this concern came from the National Language Project (cf. ALASA Newsletter no.2, 1991 p.30-1).

languages of instruction from educational advancement.

Making a related observation on the 1998 matriculation results, Dr M. R. Kgaphola of the Foundation for Research Development, as they affect the performance of black children, says:

> We submit that the answer lies in the cultural bias of our education system, which is itself buttressed by a contentious language policy. [...] A true government should invest in its people, particularly the youth, especially in education and development (City Press, 3 Jan. 1999:2).

While Kgaphola limits the effects of cultural bias and language policy to secondary schools, this trend has a rippling effect on tertiary education as well. Worse still at tertiary level this language anomaly is defended under the guise of `science' and `standards'. On dissemination information, say, scientific publications, it is justified under the guise of the `international audience', while the same does not apply to Afrikaans. After all Afrikaners never compromised their language and the interest of their people for the sake of the international community. Therefore, knowing what Afrikaans has done for the advancement of the Afrikaner people in South Africa, can be the only reason to explain this abnormal language configuration.

Unlike the British, who used their language to dominate colonised people, Afrikaners initially used their language to develop their people. After 1948 they established exclusive Afrikaans schools and universities and by the sixties they had occupied upper hierarchy of the South African society, by taking advantage of the power of their language. It is only after this stage of self-development that Afrikaans was used as a tool of oppression against the African people, denying them the right to develop through their own languages. The oppression of African languages and their speakers through Afrikaans and the domination of English henceforth characterised language policy in South Africa. This language configuration created an even more serious problem for Africans to make meaningful progress in all spheres of life. The study of African languages and literatures to date is still beset with this problem, and nobody seems courageous enough to blow the whistle on this malicious language practice.

The views expressed by the former Scientific Editor of the ALASA journal, Prof. L J Louwrens, are akin to this problem. He painfully explains the strict regulations under which their journal is published, but lacks courage to condemn the practice as immoral. In the *ALASA Newsletter* (No.1, 1987:6) Louwrens makes the following explanation:

> **The Journal is subsidised by the Department of National Education (DNE) of the Republic of South Africa**, and is printed and distributed by The Scientific Publications under the auspices of the Council of Scientific Publications. **Since the Journal is funded out of government sources, the DNE prescribes strict regulations regarding the format and lay-out of the Journal**, the rate at which it should appear per annum, i.e. quarterly, the nature of its content, evaluation procedures to ensure an internationally acceptable standard, etc. Over these and related matters neither the ALASA Executive nor the Editorial Board has much say. **Only if the requirements as laid down by the DNE are met - and fortunately, up until now, this had been achieved - is the DNE prepared to include the Journal in its list of subsidised scientific journals** (my emphasis).

Much as this explanation is appreciated, it makes a glaring omission. It only explains the position of the DNE, and says nothing about the position of the association. By explaining and defending the position of the association about its express mission on the development of African languages, would have cleared the association of any perceived complicity with the apartheid regime.

Nevertheless, this is a clear acknowledgement of complicity with the previous regime, which is but the tip of the iceberg of a host of questions that still need to be probed. ALASA is used here primarily because it has the longest history of active involvement in African languages and that it is an association that is still regarded as the vanguard of the development of African languages. The history of this association is important but it will be naïve to blame everything on ALASA or to expect the association to provide all the answers relating to African languages. It is an association that was shaped by a particular history and ideology. Whether

or not it remains trapped in that history is a different question that lies outside the scope of this thesis.

There is without further argument other related problems that still need to be addressed, especially in the new era of democracy. The one problem, which has so far been underplayed – if not completely disregarded, is that ALASA's initial implementation of its editorial policy, has had implications for both the development of African languages themselves and the profile of the indigenous African language scholars[6].

However, the essence of the problem cannot be fully captured without considering other related and/or similar situations to demonstrate that such concerns are not mere perceptions but issues which determine people's destiny. If considered carefully, Ngugi's (1986:9) forthright observation on a similar practice, arising from the brutality of colonial military conquest will suffice to bring the debate on this contentious issue under the spotlight. This can only happen if South Africans can re-conceptualise the implications of language in education. Says Ngugi, alluding to language as one of the enduring features of colonialism:

> In my view language was the most important vehicle through which that power fascinated and held the soul prisoner. The bullet was the means of the physical subjugation. Language was the means of the spiritual subjugation. [...] particularly in language and literature.

He continues to say that after attending a colonial school, the language of his education was no longer the language of his culture; implying that it was also no longer the language of his own community, which articulated their desires, concerns and aspirations (p.11). A number of views that demonstrate why language in African literature and related issues are crucial for general development will now be considered.

---

[6] Crawhall and Mankomo's article, entitled 'Alasa Conference', published in *Language project's services review report, vol.6 no.12, August 1991* is used here to illustrate this concern.

7.3.3 The impact of language practice on both the developments of African languages and African communities

The impact that language practice has on both the developments of African languages and African communities, has often been underplayed in academic circles. Raymond Williams (1977:24) says the following about language as a God given tool:

> Language is [...], positively, a distinctively human opening of and opening to the world: not a distinguishable or instrument but a constitutive faculty. [...] Historically this emphasis on language as constitutive, like the closely related emphasis on human development as culture, must be seen as an attempt both to preserve some idea of the generally human, in face of the analytical and empirical procedures of a powerfully developing natural science, and to assert idea of human creativity, in face of the increased understanding properties of the physical world, and of consequently causal explanations from them.

As a result of this view language-use has come to be identified as a problem that was to have major effects on concepts of language (ibid. p.26). There are consequently a number of views that have been advanced by a number of African language and literature scholars to demonstrate emerging perceptual and ideological shifts to language-use in society and in education. While some of these views may seem to refer to African literature in general, some of them are particular about the state of the African novel.

At the present stage of our history in South Africa academics still demonstrate undisguised apathy when they have to deal with the issue of language and literature in academic discourse. They also tend, knowingly or unknowingly, to dissociate language-use from social development. This problem, in African languages, pertains specifically to the medium of communication in pedagogical practice. It is unfortunate that such a tendency is not only practised, but such

supposedly informed people who should be spearheading development processes also fiercely defend it[7].

In spite of apathy and reluctance in tackling language issues within academic establishments, there are encouraging developments outside these establishments. Most encouraging is the fact that the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) has begun to take the issue of indigenous languages seriously, as demonstrated by the Intergovernmental Conference on Language Policy in Africa, which was held in Harare on 20-25 June 1997.

Some of the current dominant views relating to language practice in development or in education are the following, which are expressed below, emerge from that conference:

- Language acts as a barometer for assessing the status acquired by a language and also provides the ideal setting for promoting a language and adapting it for use in technical fields.

- The basic approach to the problem is its functionality – which language can be most useful for promoting overall development and how can it be used most effectively (cf. Working document for Intergovernmental Conference on Language Policies in Africa, 1997:6-7).

- Psychologically, the mother tongue is the system of meaningful signs that in the child's mind works automatically for expression and understanding.

- Sociologically, it is a means of identification among the members of the community to which a person belongs.

- Educationally, a person learns more quickly through mother tongue than through an unfamiliar linguistic medium.

---

[7] Ngcangca's, Shole's, Mawasha's, Chapole's and Moleleki's efforts in this direction, need to be acknowledged in spearheading the capacity of indigenous languages in handling literary academic issues.

- In a multilingual society, in emulation of developed societies where monolingual models prevail, dominant monolingual structures are created through educational systems, thus leading to social disintergration (op. cit. p.11).

- Language development cannot be thrust upon a speech community – members of a speech community must show that they have the will to develop their language.

- Language development should be seen as part of overall development of a community and should contribute to the development of the community (Cluver, 1996:6-7).

These, and other related views, illustrate the importance of language in social life, social discourse and in pedagogical practice. The last-mentioned view is very particular about language in development while the rest are either vague or implicit on the issue of development. As a result of these views, language-use becomes a significant integral part of social processes. However, regarding the Sesotho novel, very few, if ever, African scholars seriously considered the language configuration that is thrust within this genre in terms of its socio-political, cultural and economic contexts as demonstrated at the beginning of this study.

Focus has, where there has been a shift from traditional mores of textual appraisal, mainly been on intra-textual, to some extent on inter-textual, but never really on extra-textual issues as the essence of textual production. The Sesotho novel has consequently never been adequately studied as a form of social production reflecting social relationships and immanent social constructs. The relationship between language (in literature) and society will necessarilly steer the debate towards language and development. Such views have already been expressed somewhere else in African literary study.

The views that have triggered such interest, stood their ground and influenced African literary scholarship in general came mostly from scholars from around the central parts of the African continent. Such pioneers include the Nkrumahs, the

Fanons and the Chinweizus. The Achebes and the Soyinkas in Nigeria, the Ngugis and the Lo Liyongs in Kenya. The Ngaras, the Amutas, the Anyidohos joined them later. To the south and nearer home the Shavas, the Mphahleles, the Bikos, the Manakas and the Mutloatses, to name but a few who have contributed to the emerging trend[8]. However, Serudu (1991:15) regards this trend merely as "negative towards western critical methods and literary theories". Rallying around movements such as Negritude, Pan Africanism, African Nationalism and Black Consciousness, this crop of scholars and cultural practitioners kept hopes of many Africans alive.

The current notion of the African Renaissance, raised by Thabo Mbeki, poses another challenge to the indigenous African scholars and cultural practitioners. It demands accurate analysis of issues that inform African origin, culture and history, and the rejection of anything that undermines them. Mbeki explicates his view of the African Renaissance as follows:

> The call for Africa's renewal, for an African Renaissance, is a call to rebellion. We must rebel against the tyrants and dictators, those who seek to corrupt our societies and steal the wealth that belongs to the people (cf. Molefe, 1998:11)

This trans-national call also has implications for African languages and literatures because they are part of the wealth that belongs to the African people. It is in African languages where the wisdom and philosophy of Africans are embedded, without which their genuine aspirations cannot be articulated. Consequently, if this noble vision is neither hijacked nor derailed by opportunism as it is happening with *ubuntu*, but is driven by the spirit of honesty, it is likely to provide an effective mechanism to the solution of the problems facing Africa. One such problem is the tendency to alienate people from their languages under various forms of pretexts. The most prevalent pretext is to present English as a language of opportunities,

---

[8] Heinamann Publishers, Ravan Press, Ad Jonker and Skotaville Publishers have played a major role in these developments.

and by so doing many Africans have turned their backs on the very languages that made them.

Therefore the study of African languages and literatures should unravel such social realities if real causes for the under-development of Africa are to be identified. African scholars need to be able to identify practices that retard progress and to be careful to accept ready-made 'tools' without ascertaining their applicability to their circumstances. Serudu's (1991:17) conclusion to his inaugural lecturer, though it is preceded by contradictory views, seems to share a similar view. He says:

> The African literature critic of the future must be able to use existing theories judiciously. Whenever the need arises he must not hesitate to change, add or modify the theories to suit his purpose. The time has come for us to realise that **being a perceptive critic of African literature demands more knowledge of the social realities behind the work** (emphasis added).

Such African scholars, if ever they hope to succeed, will also need to retrace their steps, using the most potent tool, their indigenous languages, to rediscover their true identity and self-worth; for a people without language is like a tree with no roots. It exists but does live. It can neither grow nor bear fruit because it has been removed from its source of life. Therefore it is susceptible to be used in whatever way and given any form by whomsoever, like an uprooted tree that can be turned into firewood, building material or pieces of furniture.

Among Africans the roots of culture still reside and are preserved within the rank and file of our society. Therefore if any genuine progress is to be made in African (literary) studies the gap that has been created between the elite and the rank and file, in the name of the so-called civilisation, needs to be closed. Taban Lo Liyong, a close associate of Ngugi, made the following remark in a keynote address at the

FILSA[9] conference:

> The real professors of African indigenous languages and custodians of indigenous cultures, and the real cadres who can be deployed in community development projects, are the neglected ordinary men and women who roam the dusty streets of our villages" (quoted from memory).

In a similar note, Ngugi considers language as central to the development of a people. He is a well-known exponent of the use of indigenous languages in teaching and dissemination of information. In his argument, Ngugi traces the apathy, which still characterise African literary scholarship to the missionary education and the advent of colonialism itself. He says about the missionary schools and the missionary teachers:

> As I see them in their [...] historical role, they have been the forerunners of colonialism, [...] the John the Baptists preparing the way for Christ – the colonial administration [...] I found white people, missionaries, were very kind, very peaceful, and they wanted to help you, but in a very patronising manner. The Headmaster was said to be pro-African, but he believed, and often told us so, that there was no single African [...], who on the basis of merit could qualify to Cambridge. As an African you could be taken in Cambridge but not on basis of merit, more as a gesture. Of course, we protested, but inwardly we believed it, and unconsciously had a high regard for the white boys (quoted by Killam, 1980:1-2).

It may be argued, and understandably so, that the era of missionaries and of colonialism are long past, and that it would serve no useful purpose flogging them at this time in world history. However, if history is seen as a process in the lives of people, it will not be possible to give a factual account about any people unless their history is probed. If it is probed it will help people to know whom they are,

---

[9] Unpublished keynote address delivered at regional conference of the Federation of the Indigenous Languages of South Africa that was held at the University of Venda on 2-3 July 1998.

where they come from and where they are. It is only then that we could speculate about where they are going.

The logical question in our South African situation, where there are eleven official languages, remains: How will the indigenous African people develop, participate and identify with developments in their country while they remain excluded in terms of media of instruction in education, especially at tertiary level?

The consequences of this practice are evident. Higher education for the indigenous African people remains a privilege for a few elite, and not a vehicle for community development, most of who are either illiterate or semi-literate. In this way the dependency syndrome is being conscientiously perpetuated unabated, not only to eschew Africans from development but also to prevent them from regaining self image. For any form of development to take place, there is "the need for all community based organisations to become critically aware and actively engaged in determining the course of future educational changes within democratic structures" (McKay, 1989:327).

It will be ironic therefore for any scholar of indigenous African literature not to comprehend that in Africa, like other parts of the so-called third world, is still under siege. The missionary era, the colonial era, imperialism and now globalisation, constitute phases of a grand scheme of the Western world to dominate and direct the events of the world through capital (cf. Muthien, 1989:39). This happens in South Africa because English is a language of privilege in education, and in the process it confers its liberal ideologies, stereotypes and social constructs to unsuspecting and naïve learners.

English as a colonial and imperial language, as opposed to international, is in essence dwarfing all languages by dominating the mode of communication in all spheres of life. Aligned with its dominance, even in economic affairs, the American dollar is controlling the world currencies, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are dictating the pace and direction of development in Africa. The Security Council of the United Nations is also constrained by the veto power, which is a privilege of a few Western nations. This structural adjustment

evidently also constraints the functions and mission of the World Bank and IMF sponsored UNESCO with regard to the development of indigenous African languages in education. As Mazrui (1997:39), claims:

> With the seemingly democratic - albeit patronising - disposition, the World Bank's real position begins to be unmasked. We begin to see a view that encourages the consolidation of the imperial languages in Africa. But the World Bank does not seem to regard the linguistic Africanisation of the whole primary education and beyond as an effort that is worth its consideration. Its publication on strategies for stabilising and revitalising universities, for example, makes absolutely no mention of the place of [an indigenous] language at tertiary level in African education.

Consequently, such a structured arrangement of world bodies, whether in disguised or explicit forms, continue to have serious implication for the under-developed world. This includes Africa, in particular, where language in education still remains a crucial starting point for development, because:

> Language is basically a symbol system which reflects the human's conceptualisation of the universe. People's perspectives of the universe differ and these differences are reflected in languages (Poulos, 1986:16).

However, instead of contextualising his argument from language as it affects the lives of people and their development, Poulos shifts his argument from the so-called Bantu languages to different systems of nominal classification, etc. It seems to him, this is the ultimate objective in language study. The appendage to his argument that "the significance of interdependence of disciplines" and that "what has been said about the study of African/Bantu languages and its relationship with society, could perhaps apply to other social disciplines as well" (ibid. p.20-21), remains an observation rather than a statement of intent.

Ngugi aptly presents this scenario by targeting, in particular, the tradition of teaching literature at universities. He makes the following humbling observation, as quoted by Killam (1980:2):

> You must see universities in Africa in their colonialist missionary setting. They didn't want you to question things, or compare western institutions with other systems. For instance, those who studied Political Science heard of Karl Marx only as an incidental rather eccentric figure. You would never have thought he was one of the people whose doctrine has influenced two-thirds of the world. African history was taught merely as an extension of Europe. One or two of the lecturers were enlightened, but they nearly all believed that the only real education was to be found in Britain. Literature has nothing or very little to do with what was happening in Africa. **So, in novels and plays we learned about British people. And even then we learned about them not in terms of social issues, but in terms of universal values and the tragedy of a human being caught in a situation whose conditions he cannot control** (my emphasis).

While this assertion was aimed at the teaching of English literature, the same practice has been carried over into the teaching and research in African literature. This pertains especially to the manner in which such views and other social constructs are conferred on societies via the use of English as medium of both teaching and research in African scholarship at African universities. It makes it expedient therefore to conduct the study of the Sesotho novel within similar and peculiar social contexts. Such contexts are dictated by historical events, which unfolded generally from the time in memorial, and from the1960s to the 1990s particular.

The argument which this study hopes to pursue hereafter is therefore not only informed by the views expressed above, but also dictated by Kofi Anyidoho's (1992:45) capturing observation that:

> African societies and communities of African-heritage people worldwide are rushing into the 21st century in a state of despair and even panic. By certain ironies of history, they were stampeded into directions they did not intend to follow. And now, breathless and quite dazed, they have arrived at a point where they seem to have lost not only a sense of where they are or

should be going, but even a knowledge of where they were before the stampede. They are trapped in a state of stasis, in what has been described as "a culture of survival – not one of development".

If the scenario sketched by Anyidoho typically describes modern-day Africa, such characteristic features must form part and parcel of any endeavour to take Africa out of the present morass. In South Africa factors that have contributed to the situation similar to the one described above, can be ascribed to the socio-political events from the 60s to the 90s, but first the role of the African scientist in the use of language and literature as mechanisms for community development.

7.3.4 The role of the African scientist in the use of language and literature as mechanisms for community development

From the African perspective, language and literature studies are still being considered as some of the most important instruments for community development. This perspective places particular responsibility on an African scientist, whether he/she is a linguist or literary scholar to gear his/her efforts towards development that will take his/her immediate community along. As Lillis (1975:24) aptly observes:

> Before shutting himself off in his laboratory, the African scientist must pause to think what he may do to remain an integrated member of the society that gave him his passport to the realms of the initiated. From his haven of light, which those on the outside fear may blind them, can he shine a few rays to guide them in their struggle from the morass of superstition and prejudice?

Failure to heed such a passionate call will be tantamount to slamming his door upon his uncomprehending brothers and sisters (op cit.). Therefore to approach the argument at hand from this perspective is considered crucial in this thesis because

> [...] for us to clearly understand the role of language in developmental strategy [...] we must examine our literary heritage for significant pointers

and lessons (Anyidoho, 1992:46).

This argument therefore attempts to highlight the role played by literary scholarship - alongside language, as "a creative force, a fundamental tool of civilisation and development" (op. cit.). Hence language and literature are considered central to community development because they also serve as a pulse of that process. Says Ngugi in this regard:

> Writing in African languages still holds the key for positive development of new and vital traditions in African literature ... many more African writers are acknowledging their own languages and doing what Spencer, Shakespeare and Milton did for English ... African languages will borrow from one another; they will borrow from their classical heritage; they will borrow from the world. In this, the new writing in African languages will appropriate the world, unlike European writing in African Europhone writing which has been appropriated by the world (quoted by Ntuli & Swanepoel, 1993:143).

This assertion aptly underpins the expediency of a progressive perspective in the study of African literature. Therefore the argument made in this study is also that the role of literature is not limited to creativity and entertainment only. It is also a form of commitment aimed at social development, as Mzamane (1984:148) observes:

> Notions on committed literature and the functional purpose of literature among Africans derive from the traditional role of the poet and storyteller as the embodiments of traditional values and the people's 'collective conscience'. The African writer is still expected to articulate the people's problems and complaints, and to project their collective aspirations.

This trend can therefore not be considered non-literary in the African sense because it is those problems, complaints and collective aspirations that provide the writer with the raw material for his/her artistic works. To put all these issues in their proper perspective, true African history need to be invoked, as Ngugi observes:

> History is very important in any people, how we look at our past is very important in determining how we look at and how we evaluate the present. A distorted view of the people's past can very easily distort our views and evaluations of the present as well as all the evaluation of our present potentials and future capabilities. Our history up to now has been distorted by the cultural needs of Imperialism, that is, it was in the interest of the Imperialists to distort [our] history with the view of showing that [African] people have not struggled with nature and with other men to change their natural environment and create a positive social environment (quoted by Killam, 1980:10).

The argument related to this assertion is that literary scholarship should, among other things, also be capable of sensing whether its informing community is 'living' or 'dying'. Therefore the correct diagnosis of the problem the community is faced with, together with the possible remedy, are assumed to be dependent on whether literary scholarship is indifferent to, or whether it moves along with or is ahead of social developments. Consequently, the argument which is pursued and predominates views expressed in this discourse is informed by the fact that: "Literature is as much a part and product of the world as any other signifying process and is as much a part of reality as a reflection on it" (Webster, 1993:55).

A sample of Sesotho novels that have been explored, were intended to demonstrate the extent to which authors and literary scholars have succeeded or failed in their role as reflectionists and/or analysts of societal views. Such a view is even more crucial in a society that is in the process of fundamental social changes, such as ours. This view leads us to the next point where we shall consider a need to change the context of African literary scholarship as a result of the socio-political developments between the sixties and the nineties.

7.4 The future development of the Sesotho novel

Any speculation about the future development of the Sesotho novel is inconceivable without taking into consideration its past and present history. This is

the history that saw the creativity and the language of the Basotho, as it happened elsewhere in Africa, being appropriated into instruments of division and domination, instead of unity and development. It is the same history that lead to the deprivation of the Basotho of their language and culture, and in turn stampeded them into languages and cultures that are not theirs. The cruelty of these developments and their attendant problems remain illusionary in other critical methods. So is the pain of deprivation, strife and deception that is ravaging the Basotho community. Hence the use of the theory of literary production in this study to articulate problems wrought by these unfortunate developments in an effort to restore the language, culture and the pride of the Basotho, which are inconceivable outside their social life.

The theory of literary production advocated in this study permeates several layers in both literary study and social practice. By examining these layers, the theory of literary production is capable of linking literature and language practice to social development or under-development. In the process of doing this several stumbling blocks that militate against the meaningful development of Sesotho language and literature, as well as society, have been identified. The most outstanding problems have been found to be the failure to study literature within specific contexts and to ignore the role language plays in pedagogical practice. These oversights have ultimately turned the normal into the abnormal and *vice versa*.

It is as a result of this observation that this study advocates a radical shift of both focus and emphasis in the study of the Sesotho novel. The change that is advocated is therefore considered radical because it is penetrative and goes to the root of the problem, which is man in society. Therefore the problems that have been identified are linked to the socio-political and economic configuration that is conferred on language and is being reproduced *inter alia* via literature and pedagogical practice. The contention of this study is further that literary practice is not an innocent undertaking. It has a particular agenda that could be ostensibly overt or covert. Being a product of a society that is constructed and nurtured by a particular ideology, literary practice cannot remain immune from the influence of such an ideologies and inherent conflicts. Consequently, literary practice reflects a

particular ideological hegemony or ideological conflict, as the social situation may dictate.

The long history of oppression and the sudden changes that brought South Africa where it is today also took society and social formations by the scruff of the neck. Hence the unenviable situation which has led to sections of the South African community finding themselves at odds with one another. Some are trapped in state of denial, some are already resting in a utopian future, which is as yet to be realised, and the more realistic are steadily working hard to translate the gains wrought by change into a social reality. Social classes also continue to be embroiled in ideological conflict in trying to find a melody that will express the aspirations of all South Africans. Literary study is no exception to this situation as it has been, and still remains, another site of class struggle; and this time around the struggle is moving into the international arena.

In the case of the Sesotho novel, this study has demonstrated that the situation is not speculative but factual. It pointed out that there is indeed ideological conflict between African and Western interests in various spheres of life. The cause of this conflict has been identified as the unyielding arrogance of the Western world to maintain its dominance over Africa and to dictate the tempo of development. Further than this in the process of this conflict, African scholars have also found themselves in two opposing camps, embroiled in a battle that is not of their making. The one camp is supporting the West while the other is fighting for the liberation of Africa from the enclaves of Western imperialism. Regarding the first group of African intellectuals Maphalala (1999:11) explains why they are unable to relate to their situation, especially at grass root level. He says:

> African intellectuals are unable to do this because the education/socialisation they received from primary school to university has always been based on European worldview and not on an African worldview and cultural values. Thus it is no exaggeration to argue that most African intellectuals are alienated from their people at grassroots level. This alienation becomes chronic when it comes to linguistic,

religious and cultural matters.

This group, contrary to its inflated image, is generally perceived to have no meaningful role in the development of their own people because they are neither interested or acquainted with the social life of Africans and their social structures. Unlike this Euroncentric group, African intellectuals who relate to their grassroots are perceived to a role to play in their communities. With reference to the latter camp's mission, Chinweizu et al's (1983:1) observation is poignant:

> The [...] task in hand is to end all foreign domination of African culture, to systematically destroy all encrusations of colonial and slave mentality, to clear the bushes and stake out new foundations for a liberated African modernity. This is a process that must take place in all spheres of African life – in government, industry, family and social life, education, city planning, architecture, arts, entertainment, etc.

It is thus on the issue of the mission where the difference between the two camps of African scholars lies. The ideological conflict emanating from the disparate views of the two camps of literary practitioners has also become characteristic of pedagogical practice in the South African, and African, literary scholarship. The primary casualties have been literary scholars themselves while the secondary casualties are the naive African masses. The latter are often neglected because they are not considered as important role players although they are placed, in one way or another, on the pedagogical and socio-political conveyer belt to legitimate Euroncetrism. However, the consequences of Eurocentric manipulation of the socio-economic and pedagogical practices in Africa ultimately affect everyone negatively. Hence Africa has become a country of fear, frustration, anger, crime, disease, deceit, etc., which in the end trouble everyone.

However, the latter category of casualties that comprises mainly of the illiterate and the semi-literate is often oblivious and ignorant of the nature and momentum of the conflict. The empirical researches, often churned in foreign languages, have been used and are still being used to hoodwink them and to prevent them from recognising and understanding the intricate realities of their situation.

Nevertheless, in spite of these intellectual manoeuvres, the uninformed have joined in and contributed to the changing of the South African society because of the pinch of oppression they experienced in their real life situations. Consequently, the naïve and the ill-informed have contributed to the directed reaction against oppression which is manifest in the momentum of changes that swept across the country since the early sixties. A wide range of African artists from all walks of life contributed through their arts to ensure that the fundamental transformation of South Africa becomes a reality.

In fact, Holscher and Romm (1989:123) argue in their thesis on social development that for any meaningful change to take place, three categories of role players must be involved. These three categories include policy makers or politicians, the theorists or scientists, and the ordinary masses. The first two categories constitute what has popularly become known as the elite. Referring to the tendency of the elite "to arrogate to themseves a superior understanding of the problems of others", Holscher and Romm argue that this tendency is equally strong among those who are aspiring for power. Therefore the decisive role that the African masses can play in ensuring change in South Africa can no longer be taken for granted.

It is for similar reasons that Holscher and Romm argue, citing Berger, that to intervene in a situation that does not allow the masses to play meaningful role in changing society, the approach should be to "humanise theorists and policy makers by engendering a fluidity in their consciousness" (ibid. p.124). This fluidity of consciousness, Berger believes, will produce cadres "that are capable of combining a commitment to human values with cool intelligence, moral engagement, openness of mind, compassion, and competence" (op. cit.).

Therefore the changes that are envisaged in literary practice and pedagogical practice, without appealing to these noble views, can only create more problems rather than the solutions they to provide. It is for similar reasons that changes that have taken place in South Africa, and are affecting both the informed and the uninformed, have given rise to more problems and provided fewer solutions. That

is why up to this day people from all walks of life are still struggling to come to terms with these changes.

By certain ironies, literary and pedagogical practices, which should be some of the mechanisms that can be used to accelerate change and social development in South Africa, seem to remain trapped in the consciousness of either dependency or superiority, thus rendering research and related academic ventures otiose. It is for this reason that this study advocates a change of approach in the study of the Sesotho novel. Such a changed approach should have a similar effect as the role played by Black protest literature and popular theatre in uniting blacks to fight oppression and restoring their pride (cf. Selepe,1993, Steadman ,1989 and Orkin, 1991). These works have contributed in making South Africa a democratic country that has become the envy of the world. Black literature can therefore be viewed as a beacon in the sea of change which Sesotho, and African literary study in general, should navigate in a democracy.

The approach of literary production in literary study can therefore serve as one of the potent mechanisms that will provide the accurate interpretation of and facilitate the application of the Bill of Rights to ordinary South Africans. This Bill is a document that has restored the rights that the majority of South Africans were deprived of, such as language, cultural, religious, etc. (cf. Maphalala, 1999:11). Debates on translating these gains are still continuing around these and other related Human Rights issues, and no personal endeavour can give conclusive answers to all the questions that are often raised or provide solutions to the ever-rising problems.

7.5 Literature, literary study and society

This study has attempted, in various ways, to demonstrate that there is in fact an intrinsic link between literature, literary study and society. Furthermore, it demonstrated that social constructs that characterise societal structures are often conferred, via language, on literature and other forms of arts. In particular the study has endeavoured to illustrate that the Sesotho novel, like all other forms of

social production, is in fact social production reflecting particular social constructs. This argument in essence suggests that the Sesotho novel cannot be adequately studied and understood without taking related social factors, of which it is part, into account. Any approach to the contrary can only result into academic and pedagogical miscarriage. As Amuta (1989:197) aptly observes about the African literary critic:

> For the literary scholar, this unsettling realization must compel not only the adoption of an alternative anti-imperialist theoretical framework but also, more fundamentally, a relocation of the frame of discourse. Even if literary discourse elsewhere were to be consigned to the region of superstructural practice, the political and historical predication of African literature in general dictates that literary discourse must drink from the same pool as political and economic discourse. It is not possible, even if it appears convenient, to practice literary theory and criticism as an abstract, value-free and politically sanitized undertaking in a continent which is the concentration of most of the world's afflictions and disasters.

The study of the Sesotho novel cannot wish away this truism. In fact the Sesotho novel has also emerged from a society that had been assigned particular fixed definitions and roles by the international community. Being part of the larger African community, the Basotho novelists are subjected to the similar conditions that Africans, and other Third World people, all over the world are subjected to. Therefore what applies to the African novel applies to the Sesotho novel as well. This contention does not, however, dismiss the fact that there are regional and local factors that add to this international design to make the Sesotho novel a peculiar cultural production. Some of these factors relate to language, politics, economy, education, religion and a host of other social formations, which are peculiar to the Southern Africa.

The effect of the accumulation of these factors on the Mosotho novelist in particular, and the African literary practitioner in general, has often led to a distortion of the image of the African reality, even to a point of romanticising the

pain and agony that has bedeviled African life. Objecting to this trend of romanticizing African reality Mphahlele says:

> To this, and to the African's fatalism which enables him to face and carry the tragic moment, add Christianity, and you get a personality that is at once submissive and violent, accommodating and uncompromising, full of laughter and tears – no, we can't define it: we can only search for the African personality (cf. Barnett, 1983:254).

This multifaceted caricature called an African that has donned millions of pages of African literature is continuing to confuse both the imperialist agent and the African himself. Hence the ongoing search for what can be termed the ideal African literature and literary criticism. Answers to these questions cannot be found in loose and narrow expressions such as 'African culture', 'African identity', 'African history', etc.

In a normal situation such concepts are not problematic, but in Africa they are. The only reason is the fact that there are always two definitions attached to each of the concepts: the one is African and the other is Western. Africans claim to know themselves and their situation better and the Westerners also claim to know Africans and their situation better. Says Maphalala (1999:11) in this regard:

> The first problem is that the term *African* is claimed by many cultural groups on the continent. Yet in Europe nobody questions who the European people are. In Asia nobody questions who the Asians are.

This tendency has given rise to a situation where even basic things are turned into serious controversial issues as long as they pertain to Africa and the people of Africa. Africans have always to justify their identity, culture, pain, anger, joy, etc., often with an induced sense of guilt, in a manner that is acceptable to the Western or Eurocentric thinking.

It is not only mind boggling but distressing as well to Africans to find themselves constantly trapped in a situation where they have to prove or justify who they are. It is equally depressing to see Westerners raising eyebrows whenever the African

takes a stand against a dehumanising situation he is faced with daily. Such attitudes as well as related social constructs, no matter how profane, have become so naturalised to a point of becoming a way of life Africans have to content with. This tendency has led to a situation where central issues are drawn to the periphery while peripheral issues are drawn to the centre.

Unfortunately several attempts in literary criticism have failed to deal with this problem by appealing to history and other social formations. That is why Mphahlele insists on moving into the transcendental in the interpretation of literature over and above acknowledging the importance of history, by arguing as follows:

> There is a constant interplay between the historical and transcendental in literature. Literature is a product of history and may move us today, but two or three decades later only may interest us. It moves with the consciousness of a people at a given time in history. Simultaneously it aspires to move beyond the image of the now that captures a moment of moments. We expect it as an individual work or a body of imaginative writings, to increase our capacity to feel, a capacity that often eludes the yardstick of history, a capacity that moves towards the transcendental.
>
> We are always hungry for emotional experience, and so if it is adequate for us only now, trashy stuff aside, it is still an act of language we must not dismiss. Language is meaning; there is no shame in being moved by it. We still respond pleasurably to those art forms that are a repetition of emotional reality; for example, oral literature, blues, folk songs, which have become ritual, in the best and broadest sense of the word (cf. Barnett, 1983:261).

These emotional experiences that are consigned to the transcendental, and consummated in rituals, invoke once more the question of language. Rituals are community rather than individual matters. At times rituals are also used to invoke the spirits if the ancestors. These are carried out via the medium of the language of a particular speech community. Yet such noble practices are often constraint by and considered as side issues, especially among the elite, in the ongoing

ideological conflict between the African literary practitioner and Western culture, as Lewis Nkosi observes:

> ...for the anguish and the torments which have laid hold of the African intellectuals, the need for the black writer to reach within himself and into his past, arises out of this peculiar, really ironic, and terribly dangerous relation in which the black man stands to the unyielding arrogant white world (cf. Barnett, 1983:263).

Some of the most obvious manifestations of the arrogant white world are that it cannot unconditionally accept the black man in its own ranks nor does it allow him to be on his own. It prefers the black that emulates it in his thinking, language and actions and it is quick to shower him with accolades. At the same time the arrogant white world is quick to attach labels to the assertive black man that will portray him as negative, and will stop at nothing to 'prove' that.

It is the consequences of this tendency that has ripped the African community asunder, from the time of colonialism to date. The black man is forever faced with an unenviable task of having to make a choice between his and the white man's world. This study has attempted to prove that this unenviable task is perpetuated *inter alia* via education, of which literary practice is but one aspect.

However, many attempts to provide answers that would free Africans from the colonial, neo-colonial and imperialist mentality resulted into a vicious circle. This situation can principally be attributed to the fact that most answers were sought from the premise of coloniser - colonised, oppressor – oppressed, white – black, African – Western, etc. dichotomies. While these dichotomies have produced useful insights, they have not provided conclusive answers to the questions raised. What the answers deriving from these positions have succeeded in doing, has mostly been to deepen the pain, engendering the feelings of hostility and causing paralysing frustration to Africans in general and the African literary practitioners in particular.

One should however concede that such feelings are bound to emerge in a

situation where some people are privileged while others are denied privileges purely on the basis of their natural identity. Even more so in a society where certain groups of people, by virtue of privileged standing, claim the monopoly of knowledge and the standards of what is right or wrong, acceptable or not acceptable for Africa even if their loyalty overtly lies elsewhere.

In attempting to provide alternative answers relating to the problem of the Sesotho novel and African literature in general, this study takes a cue from Mothobi Mutloatse who says:

> Being African is not a game of pick and choose. It is something deeper, more religious and cultural than a mere utterance. It is a way of life: a ritual. Being African is an ancestral thing, without whom, one's Africanness is meaningless (cf. Sole, 1983:51).

Mutloatse's argument clearly places emphasis on the distinctiveness of the African personality "which is the antithesis of the exploitative relationships brought to Africa by Western imperialism" (ibid.). This assertion evidently calls for an approach where an African is looked at 'objectively' as opposed to 'relationally'. After all an African is a unique entity with an identity of its own, and not a patchwork of some sort, reflecting something else other than what he is.

Therefore the literature that emerges from the pen of the African, in terms of the definition given above, is African literature and should be considered as such. In a similar manner a critical approach of evaluating African literature must be fraught with the African aesthetic flavour. Such a critical approach will by no means perpetuate the practice of seeing African literature through un-African eyes. Any sensible critic, who applies theoretical approaches that do not emanate from Africa, or share similarities with African aesthetics, should know from the outset that the results of such a critical work have no bearing on African literature. Such a study can therefore not make a credible pronouncement on African literature.

Arguing in this way is not to deny the fact that literature is a human art all over the world or to argue that the practice of comparing literatures and learning critical

approaches from different nationalities is unhealthy. This argument is primarily concerned with the fact that:

> The writer [...] does not only create literature but creates literature in a particular climate. If that climate is not conducive to his realisation of himself as a human being then he must, through his art, try to change that society. To do so he must not only have a viewpoint but also a vision. [...] It is the writer's duty to give direction towards the realisation of that vision (Rive, 1982:34).

It becomes needless therefore to argue that different societies will produce different forms of literatures and critical approaches that are dictated by their own circumstances and visions. The Sesotho novel is different from the English novel because the Basotho and the English do not share the same life experiences and visions. This glaring reality makes it absurd to think of Mofolo in terms Dickens, for instance. At the same time it would be easy for Mofolo to write about the English people because they have had an effect on the lives of his own people rather than Dickens writing about the Basotho whom he has never experienced. Even if Dickens had met the Basotho he would have written about them from the perspective of the oppressor while Mofolo would have written from the perspective of the oppressed.

The same situation holds for literary criticism as well. A literary critic from the imperialist culture, at least the one who has the benefit of an African language, will evaluate African literature from the perspective of dominance. The same would apply to an African literary scholar who has imbibed an imposing imperialist culture. He/she will emulate the imperialist literary practice in evaluating indigenous African literature.

Time has come for African literary practitioners in general, and the Basotho literary scholars in particular, to take full control of what is rightfully theirs. To take responsibility to dispel misconceptions about themselves and their art, to create new visions and to give direction as to which route Sesotho literature should follow. It should no longer be taboo for a Mosotho/African critic to view literature

from the perspective of a subordinated culture that is struggling to free itself from the arrogance of the enclaves of imperialism. If to the imperialist mind literature is generally just art, and that his/her art, like everything else, is superior to anything African, it is the task of the African scholar to change this mindset. Literary practice does not necessarily mean the same thing to the Westerner and to the African. To the African mind, literary practice is a form of social action – a rebellion against the imperialism (cf. Ngara, 1989). Unfortunately some well-meaning Westerners have been deprived the benefit of this knowledge by Africans because of chronic docility.

7.6 Conclusion

A sample of Sesotho novels has been used to illustrate this tendency to move away from the West and back to Africa. There is to both the novelist and the critic either a conscious or naïve acquiesce with Western imperialism, subdued or overt protest against Western imperialism. Such a tendency is inevitable in the Sesotho novel and African literature in general because a situation that was created to sustain Western imperialism endures. As long as this situation persists, so will tension persist among literary practitioners. At this point the choice is still limited to avoid this kind of tension because language and knowledge in African literature continue to be appropriated, abrogated and arrogated.

However, bickering over the imposition of Western culture, with all its ramifications, over African culture, will not take Africa very far. It would seem that one of the limited possibilities to get out of this morass would be to divert attention to community development by challenging the structures that are responsible for the under-development of the African communities. Observes Amuta (1989:199) in this regard:

> The business of literature ought to begin from the creation of the conditions necessary for economic and political freedom, for it is from these that cultural freedom flows. A literary culture that sets itself this vital task cannot but be defined in rigorous activist and radical political terms that go far

> beyond the bourgeois insistence on superstructural decolonization. To insist otherwise is to advance the cause of imperialism and deepen the exploitation of our peoples.

The merits of good literature should entail the ability of the literary work to deepen the understanding of the problems the African communities are faced with and to provide possible solutions. Literary criticism on the other hand should be able to accurately interpret those problems and provide solutions to society and to assess the effectiveness of such endeavours. In other words, literary practice must change from being an end in itself and focus on social development. Works of fiction must, on the one hand, portray problems and provide possible solutions. On the other hand literary criticism should serve to provide contexts for the interpretation of fictional works by also interrogating language as well as pedagogical practice. Such endeavours can only translate into mutual and collective development in both literature and society.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abrahams, C 1986 **Essays on literature.** St Laurent: AFO Enterprises.

Althusser, L 1984 **Essays on ideology**. London: Verso

Amenyonu, E N 1991 **African literature and African historical experiences**. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books.

Amuta, C 1989 **The theory of African literature**. London: Zed Books Ltd.

Anyidoho, K 1992 Language and development strategy in Pan-African literary experience. In **RAL Vol.23, No.1 p.44-61**.

Atkinson, N D 1993 **Tsa Likoankoetla le Bahale Naheng ea Lesotho**. Maseru: Macmillan Lesotho.

Ayivor, K 1997 Thomas Mokopu Mofolo's "Inverted Epic Hero": A reading of Mofolo's *Chaka* as an African Epic Folktale, **Research in African Literature p.49-77**

Barnett, U A 1983 **A vision of order: A study of SA literature in English (1914-1980)** Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman

Bishop, D R (Jr) 1971 **African critics and African literature 1947-1966**. Unpublished Phd thesis. Machigan: Machigan State University Press.

Bodibe, R C 1992 **Moprofesara Ranko**. Pretoria: Via Afrika.

Chinweizu, et al 1980 **Toward the decolonization of African literature**. Enugu: Fourth Dimension.

Craig, D (ed) 1975 **Marxists on Literature**. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Crawhall, D & Mankomo, S 1991 ALASA Conference. In **Language project's services review report, vol.6 no.12**.

Damane, M & Sanders, P B 1974 **Lithoko: Sotho Praise-Poems**. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Datta, 1987 **Education and society: A sociology of African education**. New York: Saint Martin's Press.

Davenport, T R H 1991 **South Africa: a modern history**. London: Macmillan Academic and Professional Ltd.

Davis, R M 1969 **The novel: Modern essays in criticism**. Eanglewood Cliffs NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc.

Deist, 1994 **JNSL Vol.20 No.2 p.155-163.**

De V. Cluver, A D 1996 Language Development. **Issues in language development**. Pretoria: State Language Services.

Eagleton, T 1976 **Marxism and Literary Criticism**. London:Metheun & Co. Ltd.

_____ 1978 **Criticism and Ideology: Marxist literary theory**. London: Verso

_____ 1984 **Literary Theory: An introduction**. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

_____ 1990 **The Ideology of the Aesthetic**. Oxford: Basil Blackwell

Egudu, R N 1978 **Modern African poetry and the African predicament**. London: Macmillan Press.

Ellenberger, D F 1975 **Histori ea Basotho**. Morija: Morija Sesuto Book Depot.

Emenyonu, E 1978 **The rise of the Igbo novel**. Ibadan: O.U.P.

Featherstone, M 1995 **Undoing culture: Globalization, postmodernism and identity**. London: SAGE Publications.

Fischer, E 1970 **Marx in his own words**. Penguin: Hamondsworth.

Fowler, R 1970 **Literature as social discourse: The practice of linguistic criticism**. London: Batsford Educational & Academic.

Fowler, C de K & Smit, G J J 1973 **Senior History**. Cape Town: Maskew Miller.

Fox, R 1979 **The novel and the people**. London: Lawrence & Wishart.

Freire, P 1963 **Pedagogy of the oppressed**. New York:: Penguin Books.

Frow, J 1986 **Marxism and literary history**. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Gates, H L (Jr) 1984 **"Race", Writing and Difference**. Chigaco: The University of Chigaco Press.

Gerard, A (ed) 1993 **Comparative literature and African literatures**. Pretoria: Via Afrika.

Gildenhuys, J G 1973 **'n Krietise ontleding van die aard en ontwikkeling van novelle in Suid-Sotho**. Unpublished D Litt thesis. Bloemfontein: UOFS.

Goldmann, L 1964 **Towards a soiology of the novel**. London: Tavistock Publications.

Guma, S M 1960 **Morena Mohlomi, mor'a Monyane**. Pietermaritzburg: Shuter & Shooter.

_____ 1963 **Tshehlana tseo tsa Basiea**. Pietermaritzburg: Shuter & Shooter.

_____ 1967 **The Form, Content and Technique of Traditional Literature in Southern Sotho**. Pretoria: J L van Schaik.

_____ 1987 **Bitleng la Rasenate**. Pietermaritzburg: Shuter & Shooter.

Hall, J 1971 **The sociology of literature**. London: Longman Group Ltd.

Holscher, F & Romm, N 1989 Development as a process of human consciousness: elements of a humanist view of development. In Coetzee, J K (ed) **Development of people**. Johannesburg: Southern Book Publishers (Pty) Ltd.

Irele, A 1981 **The African experience in literature and ideology**. London: Heinemann.

Julien, E 1992 **African novels and the question of orality**. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Kallaway, P (ed) 1982 **Apartheid Education**. Braamfontein: Ravan Press.

Khaketla, B M 1960 **Mosali a nkhola**. Morija: Morija Sesuto Book Depot.

Killam, G D 1980 **An Introduction to the writings of Ngugi**. London: Heinemann Educational.

Klaus, HG (ed) 1982 **The socialist novel in Britain: Towards the recovery of tradition**. Sussex: The Harvest Press Ltd.

Knox-Show, P 1991 Writers and discourse producers. **Theoria No.77 p.73-77**.

Kgaphola, M R 1999 Pass rate must not overshadow the real challenges. **City Press, 3 January p.2**.

Kunene, D P 1989 **Thomas Mofolo and the emergence of Sesotho prose writers**. Braamfontein: Ravan Press.

Kunene, M 1973 Revolutionary challenges and cultural perspectives. In Okpaku, J (ed) **New African literature and arts Vol. 3**. New York: Okpaku Publishing Co.

Lansink, A 1997 Curricula for change, **Sowetan, 3 December, p.8**.

Larson, C R 1971 **The emergence of African fiction**. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Lillis, K M 1975 **African literary appreciation**. London: University of London Press Ltd.

Lo Liyong, T 1998 **Language, literature and society**. Unpublished paper read at the FILSA conference held at the University of Venda, Thohoyandou, on 3-4 July 1998.

Louwrens, J L 1987 Editorial. **ALASA Newsletter No.1 p.6-7**.

Lukacs, G 1978 **The theory of the novel**. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Maake, N P 1993 **Sejamonna ha se mo qete**. Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman.

_____ 1996 The narrative perspective in Segoete's *Monono ke Mohodi ke Mouwane*. **SAJAL vol.16 no.4 p.127-131.**

Macherey, P 1986 **A theory of literary production.** London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Macgregor, J C 1957 **Basuto Traditions**. Cape Town: University of Cape Town.

Magdoff, H 1982 Imperialism: A historical survey. In Alavi, H & Shanin, T (eds), **Introduction to the sociology of developing societies**. London: Macmillan.

Maphalala, J 1999 African intellectuals must talk to the masses in their home languages, **City Press, 28 January 1999, p. 11.**

Maphalla, K P D 1982 **Tshiu tseo**. Pietermaritzburg: Shuter & Shooter.

Maphike, P R S 1993 Southern Sotho literature: Part 1 – The development between 1900 and 1960. In Gerard, A S et al **Comparative literature and African literatures**. Pretoria: Via Afrika.

Matlosa, S 1946 **Molahlehi**. Morija: Morija Sesuto Book Depot.

Mazrui, A 1997 The World Bank, the language question and the future of African education. **Race & Class, 38, 3 p.35-48.**

McLuhan, M 1964 **Understanding media**. London: Sphere Books Ltd.

McEwan, N 1983 **Africa and the novel**. London: The Macmillan Press Ltd.

Mckay, A W 1984 **Educational law in Canada**. Toronto: Edmond-Montgomery Publications.

Mofolo, T 1907 **Moeti wa Botjhabela**. Morija: Morija Book Depot.

_____ 1910 **Pitseng**. Morija: Morija Book Depot.

_____ 1925 **Chaka**. Morija: Morija Book Depot.

Molefe, Z B, Read Mbeki's writings. **City Press 13 Dec. 1998 p.11.**

Moletsane, 1983 **Lifela tsa Liparola-Thota**. Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman.

Moloi, A J 1973 **The Southern Sotho novel: A study of its forms, theme and expression**. Unpublished D Litt thesis. Univ. of the North.

Molteno, F 1988 The historical foundation of the schooling of black South Africans. In Kallaway, P (ed) **Apartheid and education**. Braamfontein: Ravan Press.

Motlhabi, M 1984 **Black resistance to apartheid: A socio-ethical analysis**. Braamfontein: Skotaville Publishers.

Msimang, C T 1983 **Folktale influence on the Zulu novel**. Unpublished M A dissertation. Pretoria: UNISA

_____ 1996 Scenarios for medium of instruction and communication at Unisa. **Towards a language policy at Unisa**. Pretoria: Unisa.

Muthien, 1989 Repression and resistance: Insider accounts of apartheid. In Cohen, R et al (eds) **African discourse series No. 2 p. 285-298**. London: Hans Zell Publishers.

Mzamane, M V 1984 The uses of traditional oral forms in black South African literature. In White, L & Couzens, T (eds) **Literature and society in South Africa**. Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman.

Ngara, E 1982 **Stylistic criticism and the African novel**. London: Heinemann.

_____ 1985 **Art and ideology in the African novel**. London: Heinemann.

Ngcangca, D J M 1989 **Mabalankwe ka bangodi**. Pietermaritzburg: Shuter & Shooter.

Ngugi, wa Thiong'o 1986 **Decolonising the mind**. London: James Currey.

Nqheku, A 1942 **Arola naheng ya Maburu**. Morija: Morija Book Depot.

Ntuli, D B & Swanepoel, C F 1993 **Southern African literatures in African languages**. Pretoria: Via Afrika.

Ong, W J 1982 **Orality and literacy: The technologizing of the word**. London: Routledge.

Orkin, M 1997 **Drama and the South African State**. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Oxenham, J 1980 **Literacy: writing, reading and social organisation**. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Peck, T & Coyle, M 1993 **Literary terms and criticism**. Houndsmills: Macmillan.

Poulos, G 1986 **The study of African languages: Misconceptions within society**. Unpublished inaugural lecture. Pretoria: UNISA.

Reed, W L 1981 **An examplary history of the novel**. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Riffatere, M 1983 **Text production**. New York: Columbia University Press.

Rive, R 1982 The role of the black South African writer. **English Academy Review p.30-35**.

Robinson, R & Gallagher, J 1981 **Africa and the Victorians: The official mind of imperialism**. London: Macmillan.

Rogers, M F 1996 **Multicultural experiences, multicultural theories**. New York: The McGraw Hill Companies, Inc.

Sanders, A 1978 **The Victorian historical novel**. London: The Macmillan Press Ltd.

Scheub, H 1970 Some interpretative approaches to Thomas Mofolo's Chaka **African Studies Vol.29 No.4 p.237-255**.

Sebidi, L 1986 The Dynamics of the Black Struggle and its Implications for Black Theology, in Mosala, J M and Tlhagale, B (ed) **The Unquestionable Right to be Free**. Braamfontein: Skotaville Publishers.

Seepe, S 1999 Racism: the struggle continues in the next millenium, **City Press, 3 January p.7**.

Segoete, E 1910 **Monono ke mohodi ke mouwane**. Morija: Morija Sesutu Book Depot.

Sekese, A 1908 **Mekgwa le maele a Basotho**. Morija: Morija Sesutu Book Depot.

Selepe, T J 1993 **Black protest literature in South Africa: A materialist analysis.** Unpublished MA dissertation. Unisa: Pretoria.

_____ 1997 Some implications of media policy and ethics in literary production: A preliminary survey of Sesotho literature. **SAJAL 1997 Vol. 17 No. 2, p.80-84.**

Serudu, S M 1991 **The African literature critic – past, present and future**. Unpublished inaugural lecture. Pretoria: UNISA.

Setiloane, G M 1986 **African Theology: An Introduction**. Braamfontein: Ravan Press.

Simonse, F 1982 African literature between nostalgia and utopia: The African novel since 1953, in **RAL Vol.13 No.4**

Sirayi, G T 1989 **The Xhosa novel**. Unpublished D Litt et Phil thesis. Pretoria:UNISA.

Sole, K 1983 Culture, politics and the black writer: A critical look at prevailing assumptions. **English in Africa 10 No. 1 p.37-84**.

Steadman, I 1989 **Collective Creativity: Theatre of a Post-Apartheid South Africa**. Unpublished paper read at the African Studies Forum at Unisa, Pretoria, on 31 March 1989.

Stephen, M 1986 **English literature**. London: Longman Group Ltd.

Sulzer, P 1984 Thomas Mofolo's Chaka: Literary interpretations and modifications of a hero, in **SAJAL Vol.4 No.2**.

Swanepoel, C F 1977 **Die wêreld van Tjhaka**. Unpublished D Litt thesis. RAU.

_____ 1980 B M Khaketla's Mosali a Nkhola, in **SAJAL Vol.0 No.0 p.334-348**

_____ 1987 First observations on the organization of Southern Sotho literature as a system, in **SAJAL Vol.7 No.3 p.94-103**

_____ 1988 Historicity and Mofolo's Chaka: A Comparison of text and possible sources, in **SAJAL Vol.8 No.1 p.23-27**.

_____ 1989b The Leselinyana Letters and early reception of Thomas Mofolo's Chaka, in **SAJAL Vol.9 No.4 p.145-153**.

Taiwo, O 1976 **Culture and the Nigerian novel**. London: Macmillan.

Tapping, C 1990 Voices off: Models of orality in African literature and literary criticism. **Ariel Vol. 21 No. 3 p. 76-86**.

Tekateka, J M M 1967 **A critical survey of Thomas Mofolo's writings**. Unpublished M A dissertation. Pretoria: UNISA.

Thakhisi, S P 1991 **Nketjwane o shweletse mohloding**. Johannesburg: Varia Publishers.

Trew, R 1994 The development of training models for African language translators and interpreters. **New perspectives on teaching translators and interpreters in South Africa** (ed. Kruger, A). Pretoria: University of South Africa.

Trilling, L 1980 **Speaking of literature and society**. New York: Harcoust Brace Jovanovich.

Tsotetsi, T S 1997 **Mohahlaula wa dithota**. Pretoria: J L van Schaik.

Watt, I 1966 **The rise of the novel**. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Webster's Family Encyclopedia 1991 New York: Arrow Trading Co., Inc.

Webster, R 1990 **Studying literary theory: An introduction**. London: Edward Arnold.

Werlin, R J 1990 **The English novel and the Industrial revolution**. London: Garland Publishing.

Williams, R 1977 **Marxism and literature**. Oxford: Oxford University Press.